

SERMONS,
ON
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS:

BY THE LATE

REV. HABAKKUK CRABB, *℥*
OF ROYSTON.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
A DISCOURSE OF THE CELEBRATED
MASSILLON,
Translated from the French.

TO THE WHOLE ARE PREFIXED,
BRIEF MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR,
BY THE
REV. HUGH WORTHINGTON, JUN.

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THE BENEFIT OF THE FAMILY OF THE DECEASED.
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ON
PRACTICAL SUBJECTS

BY THE AUTHOR

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THE reader is requested to remember, that the following SERMONS were compiled without the most distant view to publication; a circumstance which bespeaks his indulgence, if in some few instances they are deficient in that correctness and polish, which they would not have failed to have received from the revival of the Author.

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MEMOIRS

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AUTHOR.

THE observation which has so often been made respecting men in a retired situation, and of a literary character, that their lives afford but few events, which can either excite or gratify public curiosity, was peculiarly applicable to the amiable Author of these Discourses. Cut off in the middle of life, his usefulness was greatly abridged, and his name deprived of much of that celebrity, which a long-continued course of

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labours,

labours, and a growing circle of connections, have insured to others. Besides, no man ever entered on the ministerial office with a greater aversion to pomp, or with less desire to be the subject of human conversation and applause. If there was one feature in his character, predominant above all the rest, it was unaffected modesty: he had no ambition beyond that of doing good in the still walks to which Providence called him:

“ Along the cool sequestered vale of life,
He kept the noiseless tenor of his way.”

The reader is desired to impress this thought upon his mind, that he may not be disappointed while he peruses these few pages, which the pen of sincerity and friendship wishes to inscribe to the memory of departed worth.

The Rev. HABAKKUK CRABB was born at *Wattlesfield*, in *Suffolk*, in the year 1750. Eminently pious and respectable was the character of his parents. His father was bred to no business, and lived on

MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR.

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on his paternal fortune, till he had seven children, with the prospect of a still increasing family: upon which, judging it his duty to provide, by some other means, for his numerous offspring, he farmed one of his own estates, and made malt for the London market. But so great was his generosity to the poor, especially to his work-people and tenants, and so ardently was his mind devoted to studious inquiry, that he did not accumulate much by business, though his life was protracted to the age of 77. The SUBJECT of this memoir was the youngest child but one of fifteen. He received his grammar learning under Mr. *Walker*, then minister at *Framlingham*: and having discovered, at an early period, many proofs both of seriousness and ability, was removed in the year 1766 to *Daventry*, where he pursued under the Rev. Dr. CALEB ASHWORTH, a compleat course of academical studies for the Christian ministry. There my acquaintance with him commenced; there was laid the foundation

tion of that intimacy, which endeared him to me as a brother, and of that respect for him which nothing but death can obliterate from my mind. Nor is it possible to advert to the years which we spent in that seminary, without paying a tribute of veneration and gratitude to the excellent tutor under whom we studied. Dr. ASHWORTH was a man, who, though not distinguished by that *acumen* of genius, and vigour of imagination, which some have possessed, yet by strong sense, inflexible resolution, and indefatigable labour, acquired a store of theological learning not often exceeded, and through a long train of years discharged the office of Divinity Tutor, with a respectability, and a success, which have seldom been equalled.

In such a seminary, and under such an instructor, a man of Mr. Crabb's disposition and habit could not fail to make considerable improvement in sound literature. So jealous was he of the smallest abuse of time, or the least irregularity of disposition,

tion, while he was a student, that he kept a memorandum-book, in which he noted down how each hour of every day was spent, and what effect either company, prayers, or sermons had on his temper. Indeed, he was such a pattern of *diligence*, that he might be said to carry this virtue to excess. Having read with the most sensible delight, Mr. ORTON's *Life of Dr. DODDRIDGE*, (who *can* read it without delight, that is not unfeeling as a statue?) he was ambitious of imitating that extraordinary person in his singular application to study; not considering the difference of natural constitution, and that a degree of exertion, which in one case may be safe, shall in another prove absolutely pernicious. I have known him, for months together, rising at four in the morning, and without ever going abroad for exercise, pursuing his studies in his closet till midnight. This brought on such nervous disorders, and so entirely shook the fabric of his constitution, that he not only became very ill for a season, but

but felt the effects of it, more or less, to the end of life. But while I insert this fact, as a caution to them who in their strong attachment to learning, neglect bodily exercise, I am perfectly aware, that in this age of dissipation, such instances are very uncommon: *apparent rari nantes in gurgite vasto*. Where ONE studies to excess, THOUSANDS are deficient in application.

In the year 1771, Mr. Crabb, having finished the usual academical course at Daventry, was invited to settle with a congregation at *Stowmarket*. This invitation he afterwards accepted, but when it was first offered could nor embrace it, being at that time under a prior engagement to accompany his particular friend, and fellow-student, THOMAS FULLER, Esq. (lately of *Bishop's Stortford*, now of *Clapton*) on his travels into Scotland. This circumstance is mentioned here, for the sake of introducing what will give pleasure to every reader of this volume, that
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that worthy gentleman honoured Mr. Crabb with particular marks of his favour to the day of his death, and when he could no longer pay him personal respect, generously settled an annuity upon one of his children.

After fulfilling the pastoral charge at Stowmarket four years, various circumstances induced him to quit that place, and in 1776, to remove to *Cirencester*, where he preached eleven years to a small, but respectable Society; who found in him a most fit successor to their late valuable pastor, the Rev. Mr. *Parry*, father of an eminent physician, now at Bath. When he had been there two years, he married Miss *Eliza Norman*, a member of his former congregation at Stowmarket, whose modest disposition, and love for retirement, were in perfect unison with his own. As the cares of a family soon devolved upon him, he was persuaded to undertake the board and education of two young gentlemen of considerable fortune:

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but,

MEMOIRS OF THE AUTHOR.

but, what is no uncommon case, by such a step he rather lessened than augmented his income. Whereas, a mere day-school, in which the profits are small, but clear of deduction, might have been attended with real benefit.

With a view of better providing for his children, Mr. Crabb, in the year 1787, accepted the proposal of his brother-in-law, Mr. FENNER, to assist him both in his school and pulpit at *Devizes*. This gentleman, who is lately removed to *Taunton*, and who very obligingly communicated some important hints in this memoir, treated Mr. Crabb with all the kindness which an own brother could have expressed. But his residence there was little more than a year and an half: for in January 1789, he had a call from the congregation at *Wattlesfield*, the place of his nativity; which was recently become vacant by the death of that venerable minister the Rev. THOMAS HARMER, so well known in the literary world by
various

various publications; especially his four volumes of "Observations on divers passages of Scripture," designed to illustrate the Old and New Testament, by means of Oriental Voyages and Travels—a mode of criticism, which had been strangely neglected; although more calculated to throw light on the natural, civil, and military state of Judea, on the weather, buildings, diet, dress, and customs of the country, than the most accurate acquaintance with the best authors of Greece and Rome. The reader will forgive this momentary digression.

Mr. Crabb's expectations at Wattesfield were soon and grievously disappointed. Though he was highly esteemed and loved by many members of the society there, yet he could not give satisfaction to some others, because he preferred scriptural language to human phrases, on points confessedly peculiar to revelation: he therefore prudently retired, and found in a serious, enlightened, and affectionate

b 2 congregation

congregation at *Royston*, an ASYLUM perfectly adapted to his wishes, and where he continued till his death. He first preached as a probationer among them, *July 4, 1790*. About that time, a separation took place in the society; it would have taken place, if Mr. Crabb had not settled there: but nothing could be conducted with better temper; there were no traces of animosity, or malignant bigotry on either side. Mr. Crabb was intimate with some of them who seceded, as well as esteemed beyond expression in the circle of his own people. But, alas! in little more than four years, the period of his useful labours approached. "His last sermon was on *November 30, 1794*, upon *Ephes. vi. 24*. which was preceded by one on *the blessedness of the watchful servant*." On the 25th of December following, he died.

"During his short illness, so long as the state of his intellects admitted, he discovered a mind deeply tinctured with piety,

piety, a thankful sense of the divine goodness, and a cheerful acquiescence in the divine will. He has left behind him SEVEN ORPHANS, the youngest of them but two years of age, (at the time of his death) at whose birth he was deeply afflicted with the loss of his much beloved consort." * Indeed, it is my real opinion, that this greatest of all his trials, the bereavement of such a partner, and concern for his motherless children, was a weight on his tender spirits which he could never surmount, and which gradually weakening the springs of nature, accelerated his end.

Thus I have given (what I wish had fallen into abler hands) a brief sketch of the leading incidents in the life of this worthy minister. It is justly said, in the excellent oration pronounced at his grave,† that "the character of Mr. Crabb was too

* See the "Brief Account of the Deceased," annexed to the Funeral Sermon, by the Rev. S. PALMER of Hackney.

† By the Rev. R. HALL of Cambridge.

too well established, to have any thing to hope from praise, or to fear from censure." As a CHRISTIAN, he so remarkably verified the description of true religion by the Apostle James, that I shall take the liberty of transcribing the passage, with the shortest exposition in my power. *The wisdom which is from above is first pure, far remote from corrupt principles, improper actions, or unhal- lowed desires; then peaceable, always studying to avoid offence, to heal breaches, and to promote happiness; gentle and easy to be entreated, mild in its carriage, ac- cessible to all, and in things innocent, willing to be persuaded; full of mercy and good fruits, not only disposed to tender- ness, but abounding in works of Christian benevolence; without partiality, for it scorns a bigotted attachment to any par- ty, sect, or opinion; and without hypocrisy, truth being the basis of all its promises, and sincerity, the foundation of all its friendships.*

As

As a PASTOR, Mr. Crabb equally respected all the conditions of his flock. Though his manners and taste fitted him for the genteelest circles, yet he never neglected the poor, or forgot the afflicted. Youth and age, prosperity and adversity, regularly shared his ministerial visits and services.

As a PREACHER, without pretending to eloquence, he universally gained the attention of his hearers. His prayers and discourses had a *perspicuous neatness*, as remote from vulgarity on the one hand, as from refinement and artificial labour on the other. The SERMONS now published, are in every sense of the word *posthumous*. Therefore, though I doubt not, they will amply repay the perusal, and prove a valuable addition to the stock of English Discourses, yet this consideration ought to sheathe the severity of criticism.*

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* The reader will observe, that this Memoir was written at a long distance from the press, and without an opportunity of seeing the Discourses which compose this Volume.

I close this introduction, with returning thanks to the numerous SUBSCRIBERS (some of them members of the Established Church) who have given their countenance to this work of charity, for the benefit of the Orphans. May every blessing be theirs, which is promised to disinterested benevolence; and while they are thus supporting fatherless and motherless children, may their own families be the care of THAT GOD, who will abundantly recompence "every work of faith, and every labour of love!"

HUGH WORTHINGTON.

HIGHBURY PLACE,

Dec. 30, 1795. /

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P. S. In the preceding numerous List, it is probable some mistakes may be observed, both in the names of the persons and places, as well as some omissions, arising from various causes which may easily be conceived. It is hoped that the candour of Subscribers will excuse them; as likewise the delay of the publication beyond what was intended, occasioned by various unforeseen circumstances.

10 FE 60

CONTENTS.

THE
CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

On the Glory of the Gospel. + 1824

I TIMOTHY i. 11.—*The glorious gospel
of the blessed God.* - Page 1

SERMON II.

On the Love of God. + Nov 1821

I JOHN v. 3.—*This is the love of God,
that we keep his commandments.* - 24

SERMON III.

To Young People. + Nov 1821

PSALM cxix. 9.—*Wherewith shall a
young man cleanse his way? By taking
heed thereto, according to thy word.* 39

SERMON IV.

Christians not of this World.

JOHN xvii. 16.—*They are not of the world; even as I am not of the world.* 60

SERMON V.

Hope in God, the Consolation of the Afflicted.

PSALM xlii. 5.—*Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God.* - 82

SERMON VI.

On the Freedom of Christ's Disciples.

JOHN viii. 31, 32.—*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.* - 102

SERMON VII.

On the Wisdom that is from above.

JAMES iii. 17.—*But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.* - 128

CONTENTS.

xxxvii

SERMON VIII.

On the Happiness of submitting to
Christ's Yoke.

MATTHEW xi. 29.—*Take my yoke upon
you, and learn of me, for I am meek
and lowly in heart, and ye shall find
rest to your souls.* - - 149

SERMON IX.

On the Wisdom which descendeth not
from above.

JAMES iii. 15.—*This wisdom descendeth
not from above, but is earthly.* - 177

SERMON X.

On Brotherly Love.

HEBREWS xiii. 1.—*Let brotherly love
continue.* - - - 195

SERMON XI.

The Almost Christian.

ACTS xxvi. 28.—*Then Agrippa said
unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me
to be a Christian.* - - 215

S E R M O N XII.

On the Causes of Religious Dejection.

PSALM cxxxvii. 4.—*How shall we sing
the Lord's song in a strange land?* - 336

S E R M O N XIII.

On the Character and Blessedness of Saints
in Heaven.

REVELATION vii. 13.—*And one of the
elders answered, saying unto me, What
are these which are arrayed in white
robes, and whence came they?* - 252

S E R M O N XIV.

The great Things of the World not to be
fought by a religious Character.

JEREMIAH xlv. 5.—*Seekest thou great
things for thyself? Seek them not.* - 274

S E R M O N XV.

The Treasure of the Gospel Ministry
lodged in Earthen Vessels.

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 7.—*But we have
this treasure in earthen vessels, that
the excellency of the power may be of
God, and not of us.* - 293

CONTENTS.

xxxix

SERMON XVI.

On the Trial of Faith.

1 PETER i. 7.—*That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.* - - 322

SERMON XVII.

On the Nature of True Happiness.

LUKE xii. 15.—*For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.* - - 348

SERMON XVIII.

On Religious Zeal.

GALATIANS iv. 18.—*It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing.* - - 371

SERMON XIX.

On the Efficacy of the Gospel in the extirpation of Error.

MATTHEW xv. 13.—*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.* - - 392

CONTENTS.

SERMON XX.

The Approved Minister.

2 TIMOTHY ii. 15.—*Study to shew thyself approved.* - - - - 416

SERMON XXI.

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

LUKE xvi. 24.—*I am tormented in this flame.* - - - - 440

10 FE 60

SERMON

SERMON I.

ON THE GLORY OF THE GOSPEL.

I TIMOTHY i. 11.

The glorious Gospel of the Blessed God.

THE more attentively we survey SERM.
I.
the gospel of God, the more sensibly shall we be impressed with its peculiar excellence—it is indeed the glory that excelleth. There is a certain simplicity and majesty in its constitution, which has not been equalled by any of the productions either of ancient, or modern skill. The sentiments it contains are properly divine, superior to
A the

SERM.

I.

the speculations of meer human wisdom, and calculated to mortify that pride and affectation which have so generally obtained among the disputers of this world. Persons of this character, through a vain conceit of their own wisdom, have reflected upon the gospel in terms the most indecent and abusive; they have treated it as a system of superstitious weakness, and have confirmed themselves in those principles and practices which are repugnant to the purity of its laws and precepts. If the glory of the gospel be hid from any, it is from those who subject themselves to the power of unreasonable prejudices, and the most degenerate and corrupt passions. Notwithstanding the contempt which has been thrown upon Christianity from this quarter, it yet continues to lift up its head with a superior grace and majesty. Its glory was reflected in fainter colours from the œconomy and ministration of Moses, and the prophets; it overshadowed the tabernacle, it filled the

the temple; the former dispensations of religion were glorious, but the ministration of righteousness exceeds in glory. Fully to describe its transcendent excellence is beyond the capacity of any human abilities. All that must be expected in the following discourse, is an imperfect illustration of the propriety of that epithet which is applied to the gospel in the text. “*The glorious gospel.*” The gospel is glorious, when we consider it—*As a system of truth—As a scheme of mercy—As a form of government—As a dispensation of life.*

SERM.
I.

I. In the first place; the gospel is glorious—*As a system of truth.* The minds of men have been generally occupied with religious speculations; some have been agitated with superstitious fears, and others have been deluded by enthusiastic dreams.

The gross errors which were universally blended with the religion of the

A 2

Heathen;

SERM.

I.

Heathen; the great uncertainty with which the wisest of them spoke concerning the immortality of the soul, and a future state, may evince the necessity of a divine revelation to every candid and unprejudiced mind. This revelation was at first confined within the narrow boundaries of the Jewish nation; with them were lodged the oracles of God; they were favoured with the law and testimony, and to them appertained the covenants of promise. This dispensation opened a way for one of more general and diffusive excellence. This is a system the most excellent and glorious not only as opposed to the errors and absurdities of the Pagan religion, but also to the imperfection of the Jewish. *Truth*, in a very eminent sense, *came by Jesus Christ*; from him we receive the brightest discoveries of the nature, attributes, and providence of God; the only begotten who lay in the bosom of the Father, has most perfectly revealed him. In this system of truth we

we receive the most exprefs and gracious assurances of the free and full remission of fin through the shedding of the Redeemer's blood. Life and immortality are brought to light thereby; and under its divine and sanctifying power, the foul is preparing for a perfection of blessedness beyond the grave. This system of truth has acquired a glory peculiar to itself, in its rapid and powerful progress in the world, notwithstanding the opposition which has been made to it; "it is great, and has prevailed;" its weapons, which are spiritual, have been successful to the abolition of the strongholds of sin and satan. Heathenish pride and Jewish prejudice have done obeisance in its sacred presence; it has overturned the altars of the one, and abolished the carnal ordinances of the other. Before this shrine of evangelic truth, prophets and priests, and holy men of old, bow with reverence; here they receive the accomplishment of their predictions, and the perfection

SERM.
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SERM.

I.

perfection of their former rites and sacrifices. In its mild and majestic presence no mention must be made of circumcision or uncircumcision; nothing must be called common or unclean; the distinctions of names and nations must be lost in the purity and perfection of the Christian doctrine. Such is the liberality and catholicism of its constitution, that no difference is made between Jew or Greek, Barbarian, Scythian, bond, or free. Under this blessed revolution in the empire of religion, her borders are enlarged, the number of her subjects is increased; the nations of the world are flocking to her standard; sons are brought from afar, and daughters from the ends of the earth.

II. The gospel is glorious, if we consider it as—*A scheme of mercy*. The gospel is good news, glad tidings of salvation published to a helpless and perishing world. When we recur to the particulars of our revolt from God; when

when we consider the nature of that SERM.
law which we have violated, and that I.
condemnation and death to which we
stand exposed; the plan of our deliver-
ance cannot fail to strike us as a scheme
of the most wonderful compassion and
love. When Christ died for us in the
execution of it, we were *without*
strength, i. e. unable to deliver or save
ourselves. Divine mercy through his
mediation is taking occasion to glorify
itself by blotting out our transgressions
as a cloud, and our iniquities as a thick
cloud; by removing our sin far from us,
even as far as the east is from the west.
The gospel presents us with a scheme
of mercy, which proclaims liberty to
the captives, and the opening of the
prison to them that are bound; which
binds up the broken hearted, and gives
to every desponding penitent, beauty
for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning,
and the garment of praise for the spirit
of heaviness. It looks with an eye of
favour and pardon on the most degene-
rate

SERM.

I.

rate and guilty of our race ; we are taught to receive it as a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save even the chief of sinners. The mercy of the gospel is so great and diffusive, that no humble lowly penitent has any cause to distrust or suspect it. It provides a free and full pardon, and the Lord thus reasons with us, " though your sins be as scarlet," they shall be white as snow, though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. This scheme of grace delineated in the gospel is more fully revealed than in former ages. The more intelligent Heathens might be able to derive some arguments for this mercy from the general benevolence of the divine nature ; but these were accompanied with such uncertainty and reserve, that they cannot be brought in the least competition with an express assurance by a revelation from heaven. After all human speculation on so awful a subject, doubts
and

and jealousies would occasionally distress and harass the mind. But it is our felicity to be fully certified—"that there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared." Besides this scheme of mercy and grace not only confers the benefit of pardon, but likewise invests with other great and glorious privileges: it confers certain honours at present, and has in reserve an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Those who were once in a state of condemnation and death, now appear as the favourites of heaven, and as the sons of God. Let us with humility and gratitude adore this scheme of wisdom, and of mercy, as revealed in the glorious gospel; let our hearts be deeply and habitually impressed with the obligations we are laid under to this matchless grace, that we may be constrained hereby no longer to live unto ourselves, but to him that died for us and rose again.

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III. The

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III. The gospel is glorious, if we consider it—*As a form of government.* Its dominion is of a moral and spiritual nature; it is supported by the authority of God and conscience, as opposed to the interposition of any civil or foreign power. Its empire consists in preserving the subordination of our several powers, and in establishing the good order and harmony of our souls. The kingdom of the gospel is a kingdom of peace, of truth, of righteousness; it destroys the machinations of sin and Satan, and confers on its subjects a rational religious liberty. The gospel is glorious, in that it is the power of God to the practical purposes of all holy obedience; it effects a most beneficial and extraordinary change in the dispositions and lives of its sincere votaries; it forms in them an aptitude of every good word and work. It is calculated to restrain our angry passions, to make us of a meek and lowly spirit, and to engage us to a quiet and peaceable deportment.

portment. The government of Christianity forms its subjects to the exercise of a kind and benevolent spirit; disposes them to consult the interests of mankind in general, and to do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. It promotes a spirit of sympathetic affection; it teaches us to take a part in the joys and sorrows of our brethren and fellow-creatures; it suffers no man to live to himself, but enlarges the heart with the most generous affections. Under the discipline of Christianity we are taught to be pitiful and courteous; to put on bowels of mercy and compassion; and to put away from us all wrath, malice, and envy with every other pernicious and malevolent affection. The government of the gospel lays a seasonable restraint upon the intemperate warmth of our appetites and passions; it teaches us to mortify our earthly affections, and enjoins upon us the pursuit of that holiness without which no one shall see the

SERM.

I.

SERM. Lord; it moderates our love and pur-
I. suit of this world; it forbids that covetousness which is idolatry; and condemns that ardour and affection towards temporal emoluments and pleasure, which is inconsistent with a love to the Father. We may conceive of the gospel as a plan of education, in the observance of which, its disciples are training up for a happy and immortal existence beyond the grave: it is a plan of a heavenly and spiritual nature formed on principles that fix the affections on those things which are unseen and eternal. The only relation it admits of to this earth, is of a very frail and fluctuating nature; it does not suffer men to confine their regards within the boundaries of the present state, but animates their minds with the most lively hopes of one that is future and eternal. Christians are treated at present as in a state of minority; the authority which the gospel exercises over them, is that of a most seasonable and
wholesome

wholesome discipline ; it does not con-
sult their present disorderly humour
and inclinations, but forms them to
such a temper and spirit as may best
correspond to the whole of their exist-
ence. External ease and sensual grati-
fication must give way to interests infi-
nitely more important. The govern-
ment of the gospel does not so much
consist in the imposition of positive rites
and ceremonies, as in the establishment
of spiritual peace and purity. True
Christianity, as seated in the heart, and
swaying the sceptre of her power there,
is doubtless the noblest institution of
heaven. It is an empire of grace and
truth that counteracts the powers of all
ungodliness and worldly lusts ; and pa-
tronizes the interests of truth and righ-
teousness in the present evil world. It
is superior to the powers of all human
government, in that it not only takes
cognizance of outward actions ; but rec-
tifies the internal disorders of the heart.
It wears the kindest aspect on the peace
and

SERM.

I.

SERM. ^{1.} and good order of civil society, power-
 fully enforcing those religious principles
 which forbid the practice of injustice
 and ambition, fraud and cruelty; and
 furnishing with the most persuasive in-
 centives to peace, piety, and universal
 charity. The gospel of God, as a form
 of government, has effected a very hap-
 py alteration in the temper and beha-
 viour of its faithful subjects. It has
 softened many a hard heart, it has ren-
 dered the morose affable and courteous;
 the angry and revengeful peaceable and
 gentle; the proud and envious, hum-
 ble and contented. That gospel which
 establishes a government so pure, peace-
 able, and benevolent, may, with pro-
 priety, be termed "a glorious gospel."

The propriety of this epithet may be
 further illustrated, if we consider it,

IV. *As a dispensation of life.* When
 the gospel is mentioned as a dispen-
 sation of life, it more especially refers to
 the

the doctrine of the resurrection. This SERM.
is the peculiar doctrine of the gospel, ^{I.}
and may justly be conceived of as its
distinguishing glory. The doctrine of
the resurrection was so improbable and
mysterious, that the Pagan philosophers
ridiculed it as a vain and mean hope ;
and it should seem that many of the
Jews had no very just or clear senti-
ments upon this head.

The *Essenes*, a sect among the Jews,
who affected a great retirement from
the world, held the following notion of
future happiness:—"that the souls of
good men, after death, being freed
from their bodies as from a bondage,
rejoice and mount upward ; and that
they have their habitations assigned
them beyond the ocean, in a region
which is never molested with storms of
rain, or snow, or intense heat ; but is
ever refreshed with gentle gales of
wind, repeatedly blowing from the
ocean." These people seem to have
had

SERM. had no idea of the resurrection of the
I. body. And as to the *Pharisees*, a very principal sect among the Jews, who distinguished themselves by their learning and apparent devotion; although they acknowledged the immortality of the soul, and what they termed a resurrection; nevertheless according to the testimony of *Josephus*, who was one of that sect, their notion was that of a transmigration, rather than of a resurrection, or the reviving of the body after death. They supposed, as this author informs us—"that under the earth there would be rewards and punishments as men lived virtuously or viciously here; that the souls of bad men should be confined in prison, and subject to eternal punishments; but that the souls of good men should go into other bodies, and should at length return and live again in this world." To these we may add the sects of the *Sadducees*, who, in the time of our Saviour, objected to this doctrine with great violence, and
in

in a form that manifested their contempt of it. It is the glory of the gospel that it reveals a resurrection to us in very clear and decisive terms. Under this dispensation of light and life, we *know* that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and the unjust; that in respect to the former, their bodies of humiliation shall be changed, and that they shall be fashioned after the model of Christ's glorified body. If touching the hope of this resurrection we are called in question by any man, we know it to be possible, since Christ is risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept; and this resurrection we are taught to conceive of both as the pattern and pledge of that of his followers through all ages. Men may speculate upon this subject; they may be ingenious in raising objections against it; they may say, "how are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" The apostle replies, "Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not
C quickened

SERM.

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SERM.

I.

quicken'd except it die." It is not more certain, that the corn revives after being dissolved in the earth, than that the bodies of Christians shall also revive after their dissolution and corruption in the grave ; and that it is the will of our heavenly Father, that those who have born the image of the earthy, should, in this respect, bear the image of the heavenly. This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

The gospel reveals the resurrection to us as a matter of fact. Our compleat redemption consists in the rebuilding of these bodies afresh. The trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible ; the sleeping dust of faithful Christians shall then awake ; armies of saints will then march forth invested with the glory of a resurrection body. A body which shall be no clog to their devotion ; no snare to their innocence ; no source of painful disorder and maldy ;

dy ; no feat of frailty or death :—a body which shall be a monument of surprise and admiration to themselves and to others. Such will be the refinement, elegance, and grandeur of these resurrection bodies, that they shall shine as so many stars in the firmament ; no difference subsisting between them than that which is mentioned by the apostle, “ that as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also shall it be in the resurrection of the just.” Conceive of an innumerable company of glorified immortals collected together in one vast assembly on the morning of the last day :—Methinks I see them viewing each other with an air of strong surprise and joy. What are their sentiments of their former state, when burthened with the necessities, cares, and afflictions of a vile body ? Or rather I would ask, what conceptions do they now form of their redemption from the grave, and the secure possession of eternal life ? What sublime ideas will

SERM.

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SERM.

I.

they then form of the glory of that gospel which has been the power of God to their salvation! That gospel which animated them with the hope of eternal life; which comforted them under the pressure of their late sorrows; which rendered them peaceful and even joyful in the hour of death. The glory of the gospel will then shine forth with the brightest lustre, after having been instrumental in redeeming a vast and innumerable company from the dominion of error and sin, and from the power and bondage of the grave. The gospel will be glorious through eternal ages; this divine scheme of truth and mercy will never be forgotten, as long as the song of Moses and the Lamb constitute a part of the sublime devotions of the heavenly world—devotions which will be conducted with the sweetest harmony, notwithstanding the diversity of names, nations, and tribes of the earth from whence the innumerable company is redeemed.

To

To conclude. Since the gospel is in SERM.
I.
itself so glorious, let us all be concerned to adorn this doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. Let us who are ministers deliver ourselves from time to time with that fidelity, judgment, and affection, which becometh the oracles of eternal truth. Let us take heed to our ministry, which we have received of the Lord, that the several parts of it may be performed with that propriety and fervour, which is suited to the simplicity and majesty of the gospel. Let us give ourselves to reading, meditation, and prayer, being fully convinced, that it is only in the use of these means that we are authorized to expect the gracious aids of God's holy spirit.

If we are negligent and slothful here, our public ministry will be very materially and evidently injured by it. Our labours will lose the weight of their solemn importance, and perhaps even sink
into

SERM. into contempt and ridicule. Let us be
I. quickened to diligence by a serious concern of the importance of that charge which is deposited with us, and the solemn account we must hereafter give of the manner in which we have discharged our ministry. A very high honour is conferred upon us, in that to us is this grace given, that we should preach the unfearchable riches of Christ. It is a glorious gospel the ministry of which is intrusted with us. Let us be ambitious of magnifying our office, not by any unseemly or arrogant claims inconsistent with Christian meekness and humility, but by the purity of our doctrine, the fidelity of our ministry, and the simplicity and devotion of the whole of our deportment.

Let Christians in general unite with their ministers in promoting the cause of truth and piety, and in adorning that gospel which is in itself so sublime and excellent. Let us all, my Christian friends,

friends, in our different stations and re- SERM.
lations in life, have our conversation in I.
simplicity and godly sincerity, not with
fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God.
Thus may our light shine before men,
that they beholding our good works,
may glorify our Father, who is in
heaven. Amen.

SERMON

S E R M O N II.

ON THE LOVE OF GOD:

I JOHN V. 3.

*This is the Love of God, that we keep his
Commandments.*

SERM.
II.

WE are commanded to love the Lord our God, with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength. This is the first and great commandment; and in the observance of it we cultivate the best and noblest affection. The love of God has often been misrepresented and degraded. By reason of the extravagance of enthusiasts

enthusiasts on the one hand, and the violence of bigots on the other, this divine affection has been brought into great disrepute, and has sometimes been made the subject of ridicule. Some have described the love of God in terms very unintelligible, and mystical. Others have discoursed on this divine subject in a manner very gross and indelicate; and others under the pretence of this sacred affection, have even persecuted and destroyed their fellow-creatures and brethren.

These circumstances have furnished infidels with an occasion of triumph, and have even discouraged some professors of religion, from cherishing that fervour of devout affection, which is a just tribute of homage and gratitude to the greatest and best of all beings. But we must not, on these accounts, be deterred from our duty, or banish the love of God from our world. Love to God is the very essence of religion, and

D

lies

SERM.

II.

SERM. lies at the foundation of all acceptable
 II. obedience to the divine will.

Love to God, like other affections of the human breast, may be better understood by experience, than by any description that can be given of it. Nevertheless it may be proper, to attempt a definition of a subject so important and interesting. We may conceive of *it* then as "consisting in such a reverence for God, and such a grateful sense of his manifold favours, as renders his service a constant delight, and our obedience both uniform and cheerful."

In this I apprehend you discern nothing either visionary or unintelligible; nothing but what is similar to that esteem and affection which we feel for the most amiable and worthy of mere human characters. Such characters we often contemplate with a fervour of enthusiasm; this is not objected to; but

but on the other hand is conceived of SERM.
II.
as highly commendable, and as a proof of true taste and discernment. On this same principle, a fervour of affection to the divine being is fully justified: A fervour which cannot be abated by those defects which are inseparable from the imperfection of mere human excellence. The divine character is infinitely perfect, possessed of every moral attribute that can render it the object of veneration and love. God justly demands our supreme affection, and to this he is intitled by every consideration of duty and gratitude. If we contemplate his perfections as abstracted from that concern which we have with them, they cannot fail to excite, in a well disposed mind, the most profound veneration and esteem; but when we consider the benefits we are receiving from the harmonious exertion of these attributes, our breasts must be warmed with the most lively and grateful affection. The favours
D 2 bestowed

SERM.
II.

bestowed upon us are more than we can recount ; they are new every morning, and repeated every evening ; our months and our years are crowned with tender mercies. A divine power at first created us, a gracious providence continually preserves us, and the infinite love of God in redemption has provided for our eternal salvation and happiness. When we call to mind these innumerable blessings both temporal and spiritual, our hearts should be dilated with gratitude, and our lips should be unloosed in the praises of our God. Our sense of the obligation ought not to be transient, like a sudden transport of passion, but it should be deep and powerful, steady and permanent. Let us not excuse ourselves in the neglect of love and gratitude to our divine benefactor : this sacred affection is absolutely essential to the Christian character : whether we possess it or not, is therefore no longer a matter of indifference. To assist you in judging
your.

your own characters in this particular, SERM.
II.
whether the love of God dwelleth in you or not; the following particulars may be of use.

I. Observe, in the first place:—That love to God is totally inconsistent with every principle of malevolence or unkindness. This divine affection will enrich the mind with every good and generous disposition; it will lead us to imitate the moral attributes of the divine nature, and most effectually engage us to be followers of God as dear children. Unless we sincerely love our brethren, and from the heart forgive our enemies, how dwelleth the love of God in us? To pretend to such an affection, while we indulge malicious and uncharitable passions, must be both absurd and impious. This, doubtless, was the sentiment of the apostle John, when he thus argues:—"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen,
how

SERM. how can he love God, whom he hath
 II. not seen." *

II. Observe farther:—If we love God, it will lead us to cultivate communion with him. Our acts of devotion will be frequent and stated, and we shall take much delight in his worship, both public and private. We shall not be industrious to invent excuses for the neglect of the public ordinances of religion; on the contrary, we shall rejoice, when it is said unto us, "Let us go up unto the house of the Lord."† We shall esteem a day in his courts better than a thousand, instead of saying concerning the sabbath, "what a weariness is it!" If we indeed love God, we shall delight to pray to him, and praise him, and a sacred intercourse will be established between him and our souls.

III. In the third place:—Love to God will lead us to a meek and quiet submission,

* 1 John iv. 20.

† Psalm cxxii. 1.

mission, under all the afflictive dispensations of his providence. If the Lord has done it, this will be an unanswerable argument with those who love him for immediate resignation. Such will hold their peace, and lie prostrate in adoring silence before the throne. They will not be inclined either to reply or murmur. It is impossible for God to err; he cannot be capable of wanton cruelty; the Judge of the whole earth must do right, notwithstanding his conduct may sometimes be arraigned by ignorance and impiety. The cup then which he is pleased to hand out to us, shall we not drink it, saying, "Father, thy will be done." If we love God, shall not we trust him, notwithstanding the darkest external appearances? Though all things seem to make against us, yet this ought not to shake our confidence, or to damp our joys: whom the Lord loveth, he thus some times chasteneth, and we have the gracious promise of his word, that all things shall

SERM.
II.

SERM. shall finally issue well, respecting his
II. affectionate and faithful servants.

IV. Fourthly :—If we love God, our obedience to his commands will be both uniform and cheerful. There is no principle that secures our obedience so effectually as this : Its power upon the mind will uniformly actuate it in all those religious duties and services which are incumbent upon us. Those who love God, will fear to sin against him, not merely from a dread of punishment, but from an ingenuous regard to the divine purity which would thereby be offended. What renders sin peculiarly hateful, is its base ingratitude ; and this is a sentiment felt powerfully by those, who, as the apostle expresses it, have tasted that the Lord is gracious. A principle of fear has its use in exciting to all holy obedience ; but unless it be connected with love, it is no longer a security than while the rod is held over us. As its influence is less permanent,
 so

so the obedience flowing from it, par-
takes more of the submission of a slave, SERM.
II.
than the dutiful affection of a child of
God. To those who love him none of
his commandments are grievous, they
esteem his judgments concerning all
things to be right, and it is their meat
and drink to do the will of their Father
in heaven.

Love to God, thus connected with
universal benevolence, and an unreserv-
ed submission to the divine will, must
appear the noblest affection to every un-
prejudiced and serious mind. Those
who attempt to ridicule or degrade it
must surely be persons of a very igno-
ble temper and disposition, lost to every
ingenuous and worthy sentiment. Be-
ing destitute of this divine affection
themselves, they rashly conclude, that
it has no existence but in the pretension
of the hypocrite, or the warm imagina-
tion of the deluded enthusiast. On the
other hand, there are those who think
E highly

SERM.
II.

highly of this religious grace, but whose minds are greatly distressed on this subject, by reason of certain erroneous and mystical ideas which they have annexed to it. Perhaps they lay an immoderate stress upon those affectionate feelings and transports which are no way essential to that love of God which is mentioned in our text. Such pious and serious Christians, who have fallen into this error, ought to reflect, that there is a great difference in the natural constitutions even of good people. Some may be endued with greater sensibility than others; they feel more on every occasion and every subject. The devotion of others of less sensibility, may partake of a less degree of fervency, but it may in itself be equally sincere and reverent, and in the sight of God equally pleasing and acceptable. We are to judge of our love to him not so much by the occasional impulse of affection, as the uniform obedience of our lives; this is the criterion given us in the text, and

and all other evidence unconnected with this, is inconclusive and fallacious.

SERM.
II.
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The love of God is venerable in itself, and productive of the most important consequences, both in respect to individuals and society. It diffuses through the mind a serene satisfaction, while it enlarges the heart with the most charitable affections. Those are not the true friends of mankind, who would wish to expel the love of God from our world. The cold philosopher who attempts this, is deserving of censure, and the man of gaiety and sensuality who presumes to ridicule this divine affection, is deserving of contempt.

How many are there who, instead of cherishing this divine virtue, are enemies to God by wicked works; who blaspheme his name, who trample on the sacred authority of his laws; whose language is this—Who is the Almighty, that we should serve him?

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SERM.

II.

Even in respect to professing Christians, how little of the love of God is really to be found among them !

When we take cognizance of the general complexion of our minds ; when we reflect on the activity of our pursuits, and the ardour of our zeal, where this world is concerned, and our langour and remissness in the service of our God, we find cause to cry out with a holy jealousy respecting the safety of our spiritual state,—“ How dwelleth the “ love of God in us !”

That this divine affection may be cherished in our breasts, let us earnestly pray, that our hearts may be directed into the love of God. Let us frequently contemplate the divine character and perfections ; these are inscribed on the works of his hands ; these may be seen and read of all men in the dispensations of his providence ; these are revealed in a form the most familiar and striking
in

in his holy word, and in the gospel of SERM.
II.
his dear Son: Here we behold, as in a }
glass, the glory of the Lord reflected
from that mirror of grace and truth.
May we contemplate this divine and
glorious majesty with affectionate and
adoring hearts. More especially when
we enter his sanctuary on these sacred
days, may we, by faith, behold his
beauty, while we inquire in his temple.

Thus may his love take possession of
our souls. May it enliven our devotions,
and animate our zeal, and confirm us in
a course of faithful obedience even to
the end. If this divine principle more
generally animated the hearts of men,
brotherly love would more univer-
sally abound; wars would cease from
among men, and our world would be-
come the seat of undisturbed peace and
harmony. We should no more hear of
the contending powers of pride and am-
bition; we should no more be shocked
by the angry passions of religious party
and

SERM. and prejudice : civil communities would
II. live in peace, and the various professors
of Christianity would love as brethren.
This divine love would extirpate every
root of bitterness, purify every unhal-
lowed passion, and meliorate the heart,
by every kind affection. Thus would
our world become a nursery for hea-
ven ; thus should we be training up for
that exalted state, where the saints of
God “ serve him without weariness, and
“ love him without measure.”—That
this may be the happy case of all who
this day hear me, God of his infinite
mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our
Lord.

SERMON

SERMON III.

TO YOUNG PEOPLE.

PSALM cxix. 9.

Wherewith shall a Young Man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto, according to thy word.

THE inquiry in our text is of the SERM. III.
last importance, as it has respect
to the character of young persons, who
are the hope of futurity, and the consolation and joy of advanced years.

That they may early imbibe good principles, and pursue a course of right conduct,

SERM.
III.

conduct, is the first object of virtuous education, and the most fervent desire of all affectionate and pious parents. To effect this, it will be highly necessary to impress their minds with a lively sense of the obligations of morality, and a pious reverence for the sacred scriptures. To violate the one under any of those pretences, of which the gay and dissipated have often availed themselves, or take liberties with the other, in compliance with the fashionable scepticism of the age, is an early species of youthful levity, from which we have reason to apprehend the worst consequences, as it frees the mind from those wholesome restraints, which are necessary to the preservation of virtue and decorum. A young man who, on various occasions, can easily dispense with the obligations of virtue, or who deems it an accomplishment to doubt the truth, and ridicule the sanctions of divine revelation, is already gone astray into forbidden paths, and may proceed
much

much farther than he at first intended. SERM.
III.
The conduct of such a one will be formed on principles the most erroneous, and regulated by maxims the most dangerous; and the danger will be increased by reason of that vivacity which is natural to youth, and the force of early wrong habits.

There is a great variety in the natural dispositions of young persons, which soon discovers itself, and has a strong influence upon their particular choice either of company or pleasures. But notwithstanding a diversity in their genius and temper, they all propose to themselves one common object, though they adopt very different methods to possess themselves of it. The prospect of a high degree of happiness lies open to them all, and animates their early and vigorous projects. But this prospect, how fatal and delusive, when merely the creature of a warm imagination, under the direction of rash and credu-

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III.

lous passions! Hence the importance of that discipline which instructs and warns, which admonishes and restrains. The season of youth is fertile of schemes the most flattering and sanguine — schemes adopted without due consideration under the influence of an immature judgment — schemes pursued with unabated ardour, without any regard either to difficulty or to danger. Heedless of reproof, impatient of restraint, they apprehend no danger till they have suffered from the excess and extravagance of their folly.

To prevent this, it will be highly necessary for young persons to cultivate an early habit of thoughtfulness, and never to engage in any projects, without attending to the probable consequences of their actions. Levity and inconsideration, where there is no criminal design, not unfrequently expose them to great inconvenience, and even sometimes to reproach. Compliances
in

in which they *conceive* there is no great harm, and schemes which they imagine suited to the vigour and enterprize of youth, may be connected with consequences very serious and formidable. First impressions are lively and lasting, and the habits of youth generally form the complexion of manhood and of age. The truth of this cannot be controverted, since it has been exemplified in the characters of thousands; and it evinces the importance of an early attention to right conduct, and a strict regard to uniform propriety in the whole of youthful deportment.

SERM.
III.

I am well aware of a common objection which here obtrudes itself, and which has received too much sanction from those apologies which are offered for the excesses of the young and dissipated:—"They are thoughtless indeed, but this is natural, and experience will rectify their faults and follies." But is propriety of conduct the sole province

SERM.
III.

of age, or is it only to be expected from advanced years? Then why are youth commanded to remember their Creator, and early to embrace true wisdom? Are not virtue and piety the most graceful accomplishments of their early years, and do they not lay a foundation for eminence of character in future life? If these be neglected, as incompatible with the present condition of youth, or as altogether unworthy their serious regard; of this we may be assured, that no elegance of figure, no politeness of address, no advantages of fortune will supply the defect.

The young are capable of sobriety and discretion, unless under the influence of false maxims, they conceive of themselves as having no concern with these virtues. The young are capable of being benefited by religious instruction, unless they are previously determined to despise our counsel, and set at naught our reproof. Let them never
conceive

conceive of propriety of conduct, formed on the principles of piety and virtue, under the notion of stiffness and formality: they may be assured it is something the reverse of all this: for true goodness is never affected, and genuine virtue is easy and ornamental: it imparts to youth a certain gracefulness which is not to be acquired in the school of fashion, and to which the mere courtier, with his exterior polish, is a total stranger. The young who have courage to judge for themselves, and to act on principle, agreeable to the maxims of truth and piety, early discover a goodness of heart, and fortitude of mind, from which their affectionate friends may be permitted to indulge very high and pleasing expectations.

SERM.
III.

Those who are now setting out in life, ought to be apprized of the vast importance of beginning well, and never to think lightly of what are generally termed the venial follies and indiscretions

SERM.
III.

cretions of youth. If they are now to listen to no counsellor, to submit to no strictness of discipline—if the voice of wisdom is not *now* to be heard, and if the sanctions of religion are not *now* to be regarded—in a word—if the ardour of youth is not to be tempered with a certain degree of sober thoughtfulness, what may we apprehend to be the consequences?—Not only childhood and youth will be vanity, but, riper years will be insipid or reproachful. Where-with shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto—and by accustoming himself early to a habit of reflection. More depends upon his present sentiments and disposition than is generally apprehended. Your destiny in life, eminence of character, or the reverse, will, in all probability, be determined by the habits you now acquire, and by the line of conduct you now pursue. *Now* is the time most favourable and acceptable for the acquisition of knowledge, the culture of wisdom,

dom, and the discipline of religion. SERM.
III.
Now is the time to take heed to your way, and to direct your feet into the paths of peace. *Now* is the time to lay the foundation of your future success and usefulness. Whether your stations be public or private, your reputation and happiness in those stations depend on the improvement you now make in knowledge and goodness.

Now is the time to remember your Creator in the days of your youth, and to form the habits of reverential piety. *Now* is the time to cultivate the humane affections of the heart, with the mild and gentle virtues of religion—*now*, while you remain unpolluted by the world—uncorrupted by the sophisms of error, or the depravity of vice.

Be apprized then of the importance of your present situation, the choice you make is equally momentous and critical ; temptations are many ; the danger

SERM.
III.

danger is great; there may be those who lie in wait to deceive, and to lead you astray into the paths of folly and destruction. For this purpose how many are the arts which are practised upon amiable and ingenuous youth, and in many melancholy instances with what fatal success!

In forming your present plan of conduct, you must not be determined by the example of the multitude, or the caprice of fashion. These are neither a test of truth, nor the criterion of right practice. Their influence is great, and their authority is venerable in the estimation of the young and inexperienced. Singularity is an idea that fills them with disgust, since they make no distinction between that preciseness which is affected and ridiculous, and that singularity which is founded on the most rational principles of religion and virtue. The young are at liberty to adopt the general manners of the age,

so far as they are consistent with truth and goodness, but beyond this they must not indulge themselves even occasionally. When they pass certain boundaries, it is out of the power of the most amiable youth to assure himself of safety. There is a great delicacy in character; there is also a certain decorum in virtue, which renders a too great familiarity with company and pleasures of a particular description, extremely dangerous. You need not exclude yourselves from the pleasures of an easy and social intercourse; nor does religion require, that you assume an air of solemn formality in your external deportment. Were we to act thus, we should not only give unnecessary offence to you, but we should also offend against the dictates of reason, and do no small injury to the sacred cause of virtue and devotion. You are only exhorted to that caution and prudence which may preserve you from excesses disgraceful in themselves, and which would sadly

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imbitter your after reflections—excesses to which those are inevitably exposed, who, without restraint, implicitly follow the example of the multitude. You need only reflect a single moment, to be fully convinced, that your conduct ought not to be regulated by those, who are destitute of thought and principle, who act in defiance of reason and sobriety, who live solely to the pleasing of themselves, and the gratification of vain and idle passions. View these characters in your cooler moments; let philosophy annalyze them, and reason and religion sit in judgment upon them. Strip them of the tinsel of fashionable folly, contemplate them apart from the glare of vanity, and how will they appear to the thoughtful mind? In what light will they be viewed by those who have early accustomed themselves to consider and reflect? Not as enviable or deserving of imitation, but altogether the reverse; they fill with disgust, as both offensive and dangerous.

II. The

II. The young should pay an invaluable regard to the first dictates of their own minds, when in a state of moral and virtuous sensibility. You have been educated with a reverence for religion, and the strictest propriety and purity of manners have been early enjoined upon you by your parents, and others. When you are tempted by the prevalence of example, and the solicitations of pleasure to violate these principles, it will require some time and trouble to free yourselves from the wholesome restraints of piety. When obliged to do this, you may be assured that you are engaged in some wrong pursuit, the issue of which will be greatly to your disadvantage. What is in itself fit and right, the mind, in a state of virtuous sensibility, will instantly approve. You hesitate, and debate the matter with yourselves, and are ingenious to invent some plausible apology. When fashion and pleasure have thus far gained the ascendancy over the

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III.

heart of a youth once amiable and lovely, I need not say how sophistical and dangerous are the modes of reasoning which are now adopted by him, to justify *those* compliances which are condemned by the first and the purest dictates of his own heart. Never, on any occasion or consideration whatsoever, make light of the sacred authority of conscience; never be prevailed upon to slight its admonitions, as the mere effects of superstitious prejudice; listen with attention to its virtuous accents, and ever cultivate that tenderness of heart, which is one of the most graceful ornaments of youth, and the most effectual preservative from sinful folly. This virtuous and holy sensibility rendered young Josiah, of whom you read in the Jewish history, so amiable and exemplary, that his memory is honourable even to this day. The same reverence for conscience you are exhorted early to cherish; the same tenderness of heart you are this day exhorted to cultivate.

cultivate. Thus will your manners be amiable and lovely, free from all that indecorum and folly which disgrace the characters of those young persons, who early estrange themselves from the God of their fathers, and all the virtues of true religion and piety. SERM.
III.

Instead then of being determined by the example of the multitude, or the caprice of fashion, when these contradict the pure sentiments of your own breast, never fail to regulate your conduct by a higher authority, the voice of heaven speaking within you, the law of God written upon the heart. Such courage and resolution will abundantly recompense you in the peaceful reflections of your own breast, and in the good opinion of all those whose esteem and approbation are deserving your regard. The ridicule of the profane, and the jest of scoffers, will be retorted on themselves with sufficient acrimony, by that secret veneration which they feel for

SERM. for those who run not to the same excess
III. of riot.

However backward they may be to confess it, though they may be on the contrary forward to impute to you "littleness of mind, and vulgarity of conception;" amidst all this indecent outrage, they cannot help secretly envying your safety, since "he that walketh uprightly walketh surely." "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all those who keep his commandments."

III. Young persons, in the regulation of their conduct, should pay a peculiar deference to age and experience. 'This is naturally expected from you, as you are in a state of dependance, and in many cases incapable of judging for yourselves, without the assistance of those who are older and more experienced. Modesty and diffidence are some of the first ornaments of your earlier years,

years, and they are dispositions equally lovely and promising. Be not forward to assume the sole direction of your manners, without any respect to the cautions and admonitions of parents and superiors. When this is the case, it discovers a conceit and confidence in youth, extremely unfavourable to their present improvement, and their future reputation and usefulness. An ostentatious air of superiority and presumption, as if you were already possessed of a monopoly of wisdom, is to be carefully avoided, as both pedantic and disgusting; it has no charms in social intercourse, nor will it in the least tend to the embellishment of the character. A decisive tone is altogether unbecoming, since "days should speak, and multitude of years teach wisdom." Young persons do themselves no credit by thinking lightly or speaking contemptuously of those who have lived longer in the world, and may be supposed to know both men and things better than themselves.

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themselves. An ancient law under the Mosaic dispensation, provides against this in a form the most express and solemn. "Thou shalt rise up before the
 " hoary head, and honour the face of
 " the old man, and fear thy God; I
 " am the Lord." *

Would you be wise, amiable and good, learn in silence; cultivate an humble and teachable temper; and never deem it an excellence, to slight those instructions which are intended for your improvement, and establishment in every thing that is lovely and of good report.

IV. Above all, let young persons regulate their conduct, by a strict and sacred regard to the word of God. "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto, according to thy word." This is indeed the ablest counsellor, and the most sure guide; this is the only infallible test of
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* Leviticus xix. 32.

just sentiment, and right practice. It diffuses a light the most refreshing to the mind, and furnishes with motives the most weighty and animating. It delineates the path of good conduct, and exhibits a train of illustrious patterns, whose faith and virtue we are commanded to follow. Its origin is divine, and the efficacy of its power exceeding great. It is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; hereby you may be furnished unto all good works; hereby you may be made wise unto salvation.

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III.

Cultivate then an early acquaintance with the sacred writings; and as you have opportunity, study the evidences of revealed religion. In proportion to your acquaintance with these, your faith in the gospel will be more confirmed and satisfactory. You will not be carried about with every wind of doctrine, nor will you be moved from your adherence

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to

SERM. to Christianity by the specious objections
III. of infidels.

Treasure up in your minds the excellent maxims of God's holy word, and compare the several parts of your conduct with this divine standard of all truth and piety. Familiarize to yourselves its awful sanctions, in connection with that solemn prospect, which it opens upon you beyond the grave. Read it frequently, and make it the subject of your devout meditation. Let its sacred authority restrain you from every species of folly and excess; let its bright examples awaken within you a virtuous emulation, and let its divine encouragements and consolations raise you above all those difficulties and trials to which you may be exposed in future life. To conclude; may the word of Christ dwell richly in you; and may all your manners be formed after the model of his perfect pattern, "who grew in wisdom and

and in stature, 'and in favour both with SERM.
III.
God and man."

You are now, my young friends, entered upon another new year. The congratulations of your parents await you, who love you affectionately, and who can have no greater joy than to see that their children are walking in the paths of wisdom and of peace. The congratulations of your minister await you, who has devoted this service to your improvement, and commends the same with all humility to the blessing of the Almighty,

The benedictions of religion await you : may your souls prosper, and be in health ; may your early years be consecrated to God, and sanctified by the powers of virtue and piety ! Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace : the Lord loveth those that love him, and such as seek him early shall find him.

SERMON IV.

CHRISTIANS NOT OF THIS WORLD.

JOHN xvii. 16.

*They are not of the world; even as I am not
of the world.*

SERM.
IV.

SINGULARITY is generally an object of aversion with all persons of liberality and candour; and indeed an *affected* singularity justly merits both reproach and ridicule. But nevertheless there is a certain peculiarity in the conduct and temper of a true Christian which does the greatest honour to a pious and conscientious character. This
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is a singularity which fails not to separate us from the prevailing vices of a degenerate age, and which we must carefully distinguish from the whimsical affectation of superstitious weakness.

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IV.

In times of more than common corruption, or at the first promulgation of an unpopular religion, the conscientious and upright must be pointed at as singular. Acting counter to the errors and prejudices of the multitude, they are exposed both to reproach and persecution, which was exactly the case with the primitive disciples, here referred to in the text. Their Lord and Saviour was now taking his leave of them, and affectionately commends them to the peculiar protection of his heavenly Father. He well knew that they would be exposed to general hatred and ridicule. "They are not of the world, even as Christ was not of the world."

In

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IV.

In discoursing upon these words, I shall,

I. First consider, the view which is here given us of true Christians; their condition and character: "They are not of the world."

II. Their conformity in this particular to their divine Master: "Even as I am not of the world,"

I. The view which is here given us of true Christians:—"They are not of the world." On the first promulgation of the gospel, it was principally opposed by the prejudice of the Jews, and the pride and vanity of the polite Gentiles. In those days few assumed the profession of Christianity, but from a principle of conscientious conviction. But in succeeding ages, when this profession stood connected with the profits and emoluments of this world, many men of corrupt minds called themselves Christians; and

and found it very convenient to enlist SERM.
IV.
themselves under the banner of the
cross, as this grand ensign of mortifica-
tion was now become the instrument
of gratifying ambitious and sensual pas-
sions. These are the enemies of Christ,
and his religion, and notwithstanding
their external profession, they are of the
world, and will finally be condemned
with it. It is quite otherwise with sin-
cere Christians, they are not of the
world at present, and will not be con-
demned with the world at last.

They are not actuated by the prin-
ciples of the world. They are not con-
formed to the sinful customs of the
world. And they do not take up their
portion in the world.

I. In the first place. They are not
of the world; as they are not actuated
by the principles of the world. They
are determined not by mere human
maxims, but by the sacred laws of a di-
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vine revelation. They derive their principles not from the system of a depraved policy, but from the gospel of the *blessed God*. Many principles which prevail in the world will not accord with the general rules of good morality; much less with the elevated faith and devotion of the Christian system. To prevaricate and dissemble, may be very consistent with the easy morals of an elegant and fashionable courtier; but Christianity imposes upon us a simplicity and sincerity which is totally the reverse of this. It obliges us to adhere to truth and integrity in circumstances, which might expose not only to inconvenience, but even to suffering.

The principles which generally actuate the world, are those of ease, ambition, and sensuality: they suffer men to live to themselves, to the gratification of their own humours, exclusive of a regard to the interests of others. Whereas, the principles of a Christian
purify

purify his mind, enlarge his heart, and lead him to look on the interests of his brethren with an eye of the most beneficent kindness. “That no man should live to himself,” is a maxim established by the authority of the gospel. The influence of those principles by which Christians are actuated is constant and uniform, and herein they differ widely from those of the world. The world is kept in awe by the eye of the public; whereas the Christian is influenced by those motives which operate as strongly in the shades of secrecy, as in the light of noon-day.

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IV.

2. True Christians are not of the world, “as they are not governed by the customs of the world.” The customs of particular ages and countries, which are in their own nature indifferent, are not the customs I here refer to. Sober, candid, and peaceable Christians submit to these with great cheerfulness, and a good conscience. They

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IV.

are modes of civility both convenient and graceful. Those customs of the world to which Christians cannot conform, are so many violations of morality and religion. They cannot make use of the name of God with that familiarity and irreverence which is common in the world; neither can they neglect the duties of the Sabbath, prostituting that day to indolence or pleasure. The Christian cannot conform himself to those customs of the world, which are injurious to the private character, the order and œconomy of families, and the regular observance of the retired offices of devotion. What those customs are, I need not particularise. Every one who is acquainted with the world, and those sinful excesses which prevail in it, cannot be at a loss to recur to them. That they have the sanction of general observance, that they are customs polite and fashionable, will, with the Christian, be no argument either for their lawfulness or expediency.

pediency. They are customs no where tolerated by the laws of his religion, nor by the example of the great Founder of it, and therefore they will be renounced by him as so many sinful pomps and vanities. If he is hereby rendered singular, and deemed precise; it is a kind of singularity which does an honour to his character as a professor of the holy religion of Jesus. To walk according to the course of this world, is to walk foolishly and impiously, and to behave ourselves in a manner altogether unworthy our Christian profession. It is to renounce the wisdom, purity, and devotion of the Christian system, instead of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour, in all things. There are certain practices which prevail in the world, in regard to which, this is the command of our holy religion, "Come out from them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing."

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IV.

3. True Christians are not of the world, as they have not their portion in the world. We read of those who have their portion in this life, with whom it is a maxim, to make the most of the present short and precarious existence. This, they think, they do most effectually, by laying the reins on the neck of their passions, and proceeding furiously from one species of sensual gratification to another. This is their language; "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Death puts a period to their hasty pursuits, and the grave swallows up their worldly expectations. They receive their good things in the present life, they fare sumptuously every day, and fail not to fill up the measure of their iniquity, by the gratification of their ambitious and luxurious desires. This is not the portion of the Christian; his treasure is laid up in heaven, his hope entereth within the vail. He is through grace entitled to an inheritance

ance incorruptible, undefiled, and which **SERM.**
fadeth not away. **IV.**

Having considered the view here given us of true Christians, "as not of the world,"

II. Let us, secondly, take notice of their conformity to Christ in this particular: "Even as I am not of the world." Herein they bear an exact resemblance to their blessed Lord. It must be confessed that Jesus Christ, in a high and noble sense, was not of this world. It is represented as an act of great condescension in him to visit it, especially in a form so humiliating and lowly. "He that cometh from heaven is above all." The circumstances of his birth; the testimony at his baptism, and his transfiguration on the mount, lead us to conceive of him, in a sense peculiar to his extraordinary character, "as not of this world."

His

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IV.

His heavenly doctrine ; his holy life ; and the nature of his spiritual kingdom, are to us a full proof, that he was not of this world.

The kingdom which our Saviour came to establish, he explicitly declares " was not of this world." He well knew the spirit of the world, and that the children of the world were children of disobedience. He had a clear foresight of all that opposition which he should meet with from the world, and never expected to be favoured by it. His religion was not calculated, either to soothe the prejudices of the Jews, or to flatter the levities or superstition of the Gentiles. By the world our Saviour was hated and persecuted. From thence he endured the most aggravating contradictions, and the grossest insults. From thence, the nails, the spear, the cross. The tragical scene at Calvary was exhibited by the world. From thence was gathered that inhuman mob that

that attempted to aggravate his last sufferings. He was not of the world; for by its wicked hands was he crucified and slain. “Had he been of the world, the world would love its own, but because he was not of the world, therefore the world hated him.”

SERM.
IV.

Our blessed Saviour is not of this world, as he has long since taken his leave of all its sorrows and humiliations. In a few verses preceding the text, he cries out, “Father, the hour is come!” “Now, I am no more in the world.” Advert for one moment to the situation of our Lord; the time of his departure being at hand, well might he say, “I am not of the world.” Soon it will have spent its rage upon me, and I go to the Father. It only remains, that I pass over to that garden, and sweat, as it were, drops of blood there; that I be betrayed by Judas, and apprehended by enemies; that I be tried by the sanhedrim, and

SERM. and condemned by Pilate ; that I be led
IV. forth to Calvary, and there crucified.

“ Now I am no more in the world, I go to the Father.” My work is finished—a joy is set before me—I am now just entering upon it—soon I shall ascend to *my* Father, and *your* Father, to *my* God, and *your* God :—“ Ye are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”

Thus we have considered the view given us in the text, of the state and character of true Christians :—“ They are not of the world :” and their conformity in this particular to their divine Master, “ even as I am not of the world.”

It now remains that we attempt an improvement of the subject, in the following reflections :

I. In

I. In the first place. If Christ was not of the world, nor his primitive disciples, what must those professors think of themselves, who love the world, and live in a sinful conformity to it? They call themselves Christians, but they are only such in name, and by profession. They blend so much of this world with their religion, that setting aside a little peculiarity in their speculative opinions, and forms of worship, they are mere worldly characters. The love of the world is predominant in their hearts, and the pursuit of it prevalent in their lives. Its profits and emoluments are the grand objects of their ambitious aim ; they labour principally for the meat which perisheth, and lay up for themselves a treasure upon the earth. Notwithstanding they call themselves Christians, the principles which actuate them are earthly and sensual. The spirit that animates the world worketh in them. Their hearts are not dilated with those divine and gene-

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rous affections which the Christian religion is calculated to inspire. They live to themselves, instead of promoting the glory of God, the honour of Christ, and the welfare of their brethren and fellow-creatures. They seem to be actuated by no motives, but what have respect to the present world, instead of setting their affections upon another. We see these persons conforming themselves to the world, in certain instances, very exceptionable. Singularity is avoided by them, even in those cases, where it would do the highest honour to their characters. The irreverent use of the name of God, the execution of plans of business or pleasure on the Lord's day, the neglect of family and private devotion, an habitual spirit of dissipation and vanity, to the total exclusion of serious piety; these, with many more particulars equally repugnant to the true spirit of the gospel, constitute the character of too many who call themselves Christians.

With

With what propriety may we say to SERM.
IV.
such, “How dwelleth the love of God in you?” Where is your conformity to the temper of Christ? Where is that meekness and lowliness, that patience and resignation, that piety and charity which were so illustriously exemplified by the Son of God? Where is the unanimity, zeal and self-denial of the first Christians? Where shall we find that lively faith, that undissembled love, that exalted hope, and spiritual joy, by which they were, in their day, so eminently distinguished?

Such principles and affections as these are not to be found among those professors of the present age, who love the world, and conform themselves to it. It cannot be said, with any propriety, that these professors are not of the world, for they are evidently actuated by its principles, they are governed by its laws, and have their portion in this life.

SERM.
IV.

II. If true Christians are not of this world, then marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. Be neither surprised nor discouraged. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Promise not yourself either its friendship or protection. Deprived of both, the disciple is but as his Master, and the servant as his Lord. If the world hate you, it hated Christ before it hated you. It may sometimes be so unfriendly, as to put an unkind construction upon your actions, and to impute to you principles which your souls abhor. Imprudencies on your part it may aggravate into crimes, and unless restrained by a general spirit of liberality, it may publicly ridicule and persecute you. Of these things the disciples of Christ have been forewarned by their Lord: "In the world ye shall have tribulation; but in me ye shall have peace."

III. If

III. If true Christians are not of the world—what moderation may we expect from them, in respect to the joys and sorrows of the present state. Their abode here is of short continuance, and they confess themselves strangers and pilgrims upon the earth. They are thankful for the conveniences and pleasures of this life; but these are not their portion; their treasure is in heaven, and their hearts are there also. They revolve in their minds, the great things which are spoken concerning futurity. There remaineth a rest for the people of God, and in their Father's house are many mansions. These considerations animate their minds; render them patient under sufferings, and naturally lead them to moderation and contentment. They are moderately affected by the vicissitudes of this life, having in prospect another and better. Their hope entereth within the vail; this inspires them with a magnanimity of soul, which could not be impart-
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IV.

ed by any the most exalted system of philosophy. It is expected that Christians be not elated with prosperity, nor overwhelmed by adversity. They are to rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and to weep as though they wept not.

IV. If true Christians are not of the world, how readily ought they to embrace every opportunity of retiring from it. The retirement I here refer to is not that of the monastic life, which is no where enjoined by the gospel; nor can we conceive of it as consistent with the social duties of religion. Our heavenly Father is then glorified, when we maintain a conversation in the world becoming the gospel. The retirement I mean, is that to which we are exhorted by our Saviour. "Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet." Those who preside in your religious assemblies, may be allowed a greater retirement from the world, than others who are concerned in secular transactions.

tions. The ministers of religion must give themselves to reading, meditation and prayer, if they would not do the work of the Lord negligently—if they would choose out acceptable words—and if they aspire at a usefulness, which may not be confined to the illiterate and ignorant, but which may extend itself to Christians of superior knowledge and understanding.

SERM.
IV.

A very fair opportunity is likewise afforded to aged Christians for devotional solitude and serious reflection. The circumstances of many enable them to retire with a good grace from the burthensome and anxious cares of the world. Where this is the case, they do well to improve so favourable an opportunity. Their infirmities remind them that their departure is at hand, that it is high time for them to have their senses exercised about spiritual things; and to gain a more intimate acquaintance with that world to which they are so speedily

SERM.
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ly to be removed. "Flesh and heart is failing" them; therefore they must habituate themselves to look up with a more than common degree of fervour to that God, who is the "strength of their heart, and their portion for ever."

But let the age or circumstances of a Christian be what they may, he will reap a peculiar pleasure and advantage from a devotional retirement from the present world. To separate himself, and to intermeddle with spiritual things, will afford him joys the most exalted and refined. To hold communion with his God and Saviour will be equally useful and delightful, and to feel the powers of the world to come, will impart a dignity to his temper and deportment. In these devotional seasons, Christians receive fresh communications of divine grace; their spiritual strength is renewed; they are hereby qualified to

to resist temptation; and as the apostle **SERM.**
expresses it, to “overcome the world.” **IV.**

V. Finally. If Christians are not of the world, how thankful should they be for that relation in which they stand to the heavenly state. “Ye are strangers and sojourners upon the earth, heaven is your home, your pilgrimage will soon be ended, and then you will arrive at your Father’s house. You are adopted into the family of God, and by virtue of his grace, through a glorious Redeemer, you are entitled to an inheritance among the saints in light. O Christians, you are the sons and daughters of the most high God, and it doth not yet appear what you shall be, but when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you appear with him in glory. Amen.

SERMON V.

HOPE IN GOD, THE CONSOLATION OF THE
AFFLICTED.

PSALM xlii. 5.

*Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why
art thou disquieted within me? Hope
thou in God.*

SERM.
V.

IT seems that the author of this Psalm was, when he composed it, in circumstances of great distress and suffering. He was in a state of exile, and deprived of the public worship of his God. He was exposed to the ridicule, as well as the oppression of his enemies:
“ My

“My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, where is thy God?” Such a reflection wicked men in all ages have been prone to throw upon his pious servants, when in circumstances of great tribulation; hence they rashly conclude, that their God has forsaken them, because he does not immediately appear for their deliverance.

SERM.
V.

The Psalmist, now banished from the courts of the Lord, could recollect better days; days in which he had gone with the multitude to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holy-day. This recollection did but imbitter and aggravate his present sufferings: “When I remember those things, I pour out my soul in me;” my soul is as it were dissolved, and poured forth like water: “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy water spouts; all thy waves and billows are gone over me.” I

84 *Hope in God, the Consolation of the Afflicted.*

SERM.

V.

am tossed to and fro as on a boisterous ocean ; such is the disquietude and trouble of my soul. The sons and daughters of affliction and sorrow well understand this pathetic description. Some, who have hitherto lived at their ease, may deem the colouring too high ; but others, who have formed a more familiar and intimate acquaintance with grief, are in no danger of misunderstanding the language of the Psalmist. Their own experience enables them to put a faithful comment upon the melancholy strain in which he here writes.

There are two extremes which we ought carefully to avoid in our descriptions of the present life. One under the influence of melancholy passions, represents the scene as too dark and gloomy. Another, gay, dissipated and prosperous, represents it in a light so chearful and joyous, as will not consist with those trials and troubles which are every day experienced, and which the providence

providence of the Almighty, for the wisest reasons, annexes to our present state and condition. SERM.
V.

The fact is, that our present existence is a mixed scene of joy and sorrow; of good and evil: the day of adversity is set over against the day of prosperity, to answer purposes the most salutary in God's moral government. An uninterrupted scene of enjoyment might make us dissipated, presumptuous and self confident; if we always lived at our ease, and experienced no melancholy afflictive changes, we might be tempted to forget God, to cast off fear, and restrain prayer before him.

To prevent this, he is pleased as it were to lay his hand upon us; to awaken our strength by sickness and affliction; or to take from us some very desirable and endeared comfort; thus demonstrating, in a very affecting form, our frailty and dependance, and pointing

86 *Hope in God, the Consolation of the Afflicted.*

SERM. ing out to us the necessity of an interest
V. in higher blessings than those that are
earthly, temporary, and transient.

I. The disquieting scenes of human life, first present themselves to our consideration, from the state of the Psalmist, as described in the text: His soul was cast down under a pressure of trouble and melancholy,

II. And then, secondly, the remedy provided for the relief of the pious amidst this disquietude:—"Hope in God."

I. Some may think it an ineligible task to bring forward to public view, the troubles and calamities incident to mortals: But when we reflect, that none can be quite unconcerned with the subject, since "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward," we are furnished with an apology for entering on this more melancholy part of our subject.

subject. Even to those whose hearts SERM.
V.
are now at ease, and whose mountain
standeth strong, it may have its use,
since they may expect those days of
darkness, or seasons of adversity, with
which others have been already ac-
quainted.

To those who are now suffering from
various causes of anxiety and affliction,
to hear of the disquietude of the pious
Psalmist may administer comfort and
support. From hence, in their deject-
ed moments, they will infer, that no
strange thing has happened to them.
Many of the sincere servants of God
have been reduced to a state very low
and afflicted. These then we may take
for our pattern, amidst the present dis-
quieting scenes of life. Let us survey
with attention, the manner of their de-
portment under their different troubles,
and let us learn the consolations by
which they were supported.

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SERM.
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The disquieting scenes of human life are not confined to any particular period of time, but have been various through all ages, ever since our departure from the great fountain of life and happiness. These scenes are so many and diversified, that before I could enumerate them all, I must visit many dark abodes of sorrow, to which at present I am a total stranger; and must have revealed to me the secrets of many desponding hearts, to which no mortal has yet had access. We must then content ourselves with the general outlines of a melancholy picture, which we need not wish to contemplate in a more perfect form. As sufficient for the day is the evil thereof, so we may rest satisfied with a brief and general survey of this part of our subject.

What a checkered scene is the present life, and what changes are continually taking place in it! One is exalted, another is depressed, and even the

the same individual at different times, SERM.
V.
may say with the Psalmist, "Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down." To day his mountain stands strong; to-morrow it is removed, and cast into the midst of the sea. Now he receives good at the hand of God, then he receives evil; and it is the same kind and gracious power which presides in the dispensation of each. Some are afflicted in their bodies; others are disquieted in their minds; and others are cast down by reason of the melancholy vicissitudes of fortune. Many have formed a very intimate acquaintance with grief and sorrow; their few days have been full of trouble, and Providence, for wise and good reasons, has denied them those scenes of prosperity and chearfulness, which have been allotted to their neighbours around them.

Some have been injured by the malignity of their enemies; others have

M suffered

SERM. ^{V.} suffered from the neglect and unkindness of their friends.

Some are disquieted with the bare apprehension of poverty; others are sunk into the depth of its distresses. On the one hand I hear the voice of mourning and lamentation on account of the loss of dearly beloved children; "Joseph is not, Simeon is not," Benjamin also is taken away by a stroke. On the other hand, I behold the widows and fatherless, covered with ashes, cloathed with sackcloth, each mourning in the bitterness of their souls. Many are now suffering in the dark cells of secret retirement, concerning the causes of whose grief, I cannot perhaps form the least probable conjecture; every heart nevertheless knows, and most intimately too, its own bitterness; it knows the multitude of its anxious thoughts, of its distressing fears, and were it necessary, could give you a very affecting

affecting detail of its present sorrows SERM.
V.
and sufferings. No external situation in life, however elevated, is so far privileged as to be totally freed from occasional anxiety and disquietude; these will obtrude themselves in circles apparently the most gay and joyous. "Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of mirth is heaviness." From the prince to the peasant, from the palace to the cottage, you may trace the footsteps of disquietude and sorrow.

Melancholy view of human life! Has not the gloom of mere imagination painted it in colours too dark and dismal, or is it realized by experience and fact?

Supposing the latter to be the case, are we to be out of humour with our present existence, and give way to a spirit of dissatisfaction and fretfulness? God forbid. If the present life has its

M 2 sorrows,

SERM. ^{V.} sorrows, it has its comforts and enjoy-
 {ments too. Not to allow this would
 argue a very corrupt and ungrateful
 heart : it would be to blacken our sub-
 ject, and defame our God. The bitter
 drops, which are now mingled in the
 cup of life are medicinal, and may be
 productive of our spiritual health, and
 the final salvation of our souls. The
 present is not the final destiny of man ;
 nor is this world intended, by divine
 Providence, to be the seat of uninter-
 rupted and permanent felicity,

We are here in a state of trial and
 discipline, where it is necessary for our
 real good, that we should be disquieted
 and afflicted, as well as pleased and
 prospered.

This being the case, why should any
 presume to arraign the conduct of the
 great Governor of all, who afflicts not
 for his pleasure, but our profit, and un-
 der the pressure of our heaviest troubles
 is

is proposing himself as the object of our SERM,
hope and confidence. This leads me to V.
the second *general head* of my subject,

II, The remedy provided for the relief of the pious amidst the disquieting scenes of human life. "Hope thou in God."

The pious Psalmist argues with himself under the present keen sensations of distress; and gives a check to that torrent of grief which was overwhelming his soul. Nature obliged him to feel, and the God that formed him knew his frame, and compassionated his frailty. Religion did not extirpate his sensibility, but seasonably exerted her divine power both to moderate and sanctify his sorrows. "Why art thou cast down, O my Soul; why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God." This is indeed the grand remedy, the sovereign antidote for all our present cares and troubles. Under these

SERM.

V.

these troubles, some harden their hearts, and thus despise the chastening of the Lord: they are determined neither to feel nor to think of them: they fly to scenes of luxurious dissipation, and never make the inquiry with Job, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me." This conduct is a bold defiance of the Majesty of Heaven, and an impious contempt of the hand of God when he is pleased to rebuke and chasten us. That others possessed of true humility and unfeigned piety may not faint in the day of their adversity, he is pleased to invite them to place their hope and confidence in himself; in consequence of which the Rock of ages is the refuge of their souls in every time of calamity and trouble. What a privilege, my Christian Friends, that you are permitted to avail yourselves of so high a consolation amidst the disquieting scenes of human life. You have a God to whom you may look up with chearful confidence, and that without

without the imputation of presumption; SERM.
a God that is both able and willing to V.
deliver or support you; a God that
has revealed himself in his holy word in
forms of peculiar condescension and
grace; a God that has been pleased to
enter into covenant with you, and who
will never leave nor forsake those who
hope in his mercy; the God and Father
of our Lord Jesus Christ; the God and
Father of all the sincere followers of
his Son.

In all ages he has ever manifested his
favour and protection to his suffering
servants. He has been the God of
Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Aaron's
Eli's and David's God. Amidst their
diversified afflictions and troubles, they
did not give up their hope in him, but
bowed in silence before the throne,
when that throne was encompassed
with darkness. They were dumb and
opened not their mouths; or in awful
admiration of the divine hand, cried
out,

96 *Hope in God, the Consolation of the Afflicted.*

SERM. out, "it is the Lord, let him do what
V. "seemeth him good."

You have also heard of the patience of Job in connection with his hope and confidence in God, even in circumstances the most afflictive and desperate: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."

It is the duty of the pious servants of God to hope in him, even when all things seem to make against them, and this hope persisted in, will never deceive nor confound them. If they fly to other refuges they will fail, but with the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength; he is a gracious, faithful, and covenant-keeping God, and in various forms has been a present help in time of trouble.

The providence of God encourages your hope in him; for he is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works.

works. The promises of his grace in-
vite your confidence—those promises
which are great and precious, and which
the servants of God in all ages have
made their song in this house of their
pilgrimage.

SERM.
V.

Are you cast down and disquieted on
account of the circumstances of your
external condition? The Lord is your
shepherd, you shall not want.

Are you filled with timidity, and
bowed down with weakness? Wait on
the Lord, be of good courage—hope in
him—wait, I say, on the Lord.

Are you bereaved of earth's most va-
luable comforts, and are the most affec-
tionate relations dissolved by death?
When father and mother forsake you,
the Lord will take you up.

Are your beloved children no more?
Have you, with bleeding hearts, per-
formed

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98 *Hope in God, the Consolation of the Afflicted.*

SERM. formed for them the last solemn rites?

V. Hope in God, who can be better unto you than many sons and daughters.

Are you intimidated by the prospect of death? Be not cast down. Your God will be with you to support and comfort you. Under the influence of religious faith and hope, you may take a pleasing and delightful prospect of life and immortality beyond the grave.

Do flesh and heart fail you? Are you about to lay down this tabernacle? Be not disquieted; hope in that God who will rebuild it afresh with every circumstance of advantage and glory; trust the promises of that Saviour who is the resurrection and the life: because he lives, you shall live also.

When we take a view of the servants of God, amidst the diversified scenes of life, and in the near prospect of death; it evidently appears, that they have no
just

just cause to be cast down or disquieted. SERM.
V.
Hope in God is a sovereign remedy for all their distressing fears and apprehensions. In the multitude of their thoughts within them, the comforts of God may delight their souls. The case of such is truly enviable: "Happy, thrice happy the men whose God is the Lord,"

On the other hand, how melancholy is the condition of those persons who live without hope, and without God in the world. Such estrange themselves from the noblest pleasures, and highest consolations — consolations peculiarly calming and reviving in seasons of disquieting sadness and adversity. None but those who are uniformly religious can reasonably expect these divine comforts in the time of their trouble.

Let those who are strangers to a life of piety, no longer presume to despise the consolations of true religion—consolations which are no way connected

SERM. with the irrational warmth of a wild
 { V. } enthusiasm; but are common to the
 experience of all sober, intelligent, and
 judicious Christians.

The ways of wisdom are "ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." Hence appears the futility of that objection made by many to the religious life, as partaking of the gloom of despondency and melancholy. A false religion may have agitated the minds of men with various servile and superstitious fears; but the religion of the gospel inspires the soul with hope and cheerfulness, with a peace that is divine, and that passeth all understanding. Under its sacred influence, we shall not be "afraid of evil tidings; our hearts will be fixed, trusting in the Lord." The light of God's countenance will be lifted up upon us; the arm of his power will defend and save us: he will guide our feet through the labyrinth of life; and finally receive our souls to glory.

The

The God whom we now serve and SERM.
worship, is the Author of grace and V.
consolation. His comforts are neither
few nor small. “ They that know his
“ name, will put their trust in him. He
“ will be a refuge for the oppressed, a
“ refuge in times of trouble. He for-
“ saketh not them that seek him, nor
“ forgetteth the cry of the humble.
“ Why art thou cast down, O my soul,
“ and why art thou disquieted within
“ thee? Hope thou in God.”

SERMON

SERMON VI.

ON THE FREEDOM OF CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

JOHN viii. 31, 32.

*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my
Disciples indeed; and ye shall know the
truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

SERM.
VI.

OUR blessed Lord, in the days of his flesh, was sometimes furround-
ed with a crowd of admirers, who, be-
ing struck with the power and benefi-
cence of his miracles, expected to be
enriched with temporal emoluments.
These persons were very forward to
follow

follow Christ; but our Saviour being acquainted with the motives of their conduct, discouraged a resolution so rash and erroneous; he desires them seriously to deliberate upon the matter, to sit down, and to count the cost. If their regards to him were founded on principles worldly and ambitious, he warned them, his religion would make no provision for the pleasing and satisfying such irregular desires; but that on the contrary, if any man would follow him, he must deny himself, and take up his cross. "Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, cannot be my disciple." Those alone are his true followers who continue in his word, who abide by their profession in circumstances of the most formidable distress and suffering. "Then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

SERM.
VI.

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SERM.

VI.

In discoursing upon the words of the text, we shall consider,

I. The nature of that relation which subsists between Jesus and his followers.

II. The evidence or proof of its genuineness, a continuance in his word. "Then are ye my disciples indeed."

III. The privilege connected with this relation: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

I. The nature of that relation which subsists between Jesus and his followers. This relation is of a spiritual nature; not founded on the principles of this world, but on those which are taught us by the grace of God. Discipleship with Jesus, (let it be spoken with reverence) resembles that relation which

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we see subsisting between tutors and pupils; the one teaches, and the other learns. Those are said to be the disciples of Plato, Socrates, or Moses, who receive the doctrines which they respectively taught. Philosophers, politicians and divines, have each of them had their admirers and followers. Some names and systems have been rendered venerable merely by antiquity; others have captivated by the force of novelty; and others have established their authority and dominion, by the native charms of truth and goodness.

SERM.
VI.

On this principle the name of Jesus is rendered venerable in the Christian church; his character was "full of grace and truth." The heads of some religious sects have secured to themselves followers by the point of the sword; others have allured them by the wealth and emoluments of the present world; they have, as it were, taken them to some high mountain, and presented

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SERM.
VI.

presented to their view this province, or that kingdom, saying, this will I give if you will become my disciple. No wonder that such persons should have their followers; discipleship with these is a mere voluptuous or mercenary bond: the whole world, we may expect to go after such, while a love of power, ambition, and luxury is its governing principle. Discipleship with Jesus has no such inducements; it is not forced by the terrors of persecution, nor is it produced by the flattering motives of ease or wealth. It is a relation that takes place on very different principles, such as the power of truth, the beauty of holiness, and faith in the veracity of our Saviour's character. To persuade men to become his disciples, he neither soothes their prejudices, nor flatters their pride, nor tempts them by any of the powers of this world. He instructs them in a system of heavenly doctrine: he sets before them an example of the most perfect virtue; he gives miraculous

lous proofs of his mission, and throws a light upon life and immortality: he dies upon the cross, rises from the tomb, and ascends into heaven. These are the means by which they are engaged to become his disciples. They enter into this relation under a full conviction of the truth and power of their divine Leader. He comes with the credentials of the promised Messiah, he teaches with an authority peculiar to himself: his disciples, on their part, yield a ready and unreserved subjection: they cherish a meek and teachable temper: they lay aside their former petulance and confidence: their high thoughts are brought into subjection in his presence, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

SERM.
VI.

The relation supposes a very humble and lowly spirit on the part of his followers. The ardour of passion, and the obstinacy of prejudice are now abated: submission and reverence, affection and

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confidence

SERM.

VI.

confidence, are the general outlines of their religious character. They place themselves at his feet, and receive the law from his lips. They treasure up in their minds those sacred maxims which his heavenly wisdom has suggested; they delight to attend upon his sublime instructions, and do as it were "hide his word in their hearts." They dwell with delight on its sacred promises; their souls are refreshed with its strong consolations; they make it the "man of their council," the guide of their youth, and the staff of their old age.

Christ as their teacher accommodates himself to the different capacities and circumstances of his disciples. He speaks to them as they are able to bear it; he consults their different ages and abilities; he imparts to all that spiritual food which is convenient for them; he gives to each his portion in due season; the babes will he feed with milk, and the strong men with meat. The young
disciples

disciples are taught to flee youthful SERM.
VI. lusts; to turn off their eyes from beholding vanity; to study modesty and humility in their deportment; to be dutiful to their parents, submissive to their superiors, and kindly affectionate one to another. They are instructed in the nature and excellence of true religion; they are informed of the peace and pleasure of piety, and are assured that the yoke of Christ is easy, and that his burden is light. Another class is instructed in those maxims which have respect to the cares and commerce of this world; that they abstain from the love of it; that their conversation be such as becometh the gospel, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God. A third class is instructed in a meek and patient resignation to the disposals of providence. Having done the will of God in the active services of a religious obedience; they are taught to wait with patience and fortitude till their change come.

SERM.
VI.

come. Being about to put off this tabernacle their faith is directed to that “building of God, an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens.”

Thus does our divine and heavenly Instructor accommodate himself to the different ages and capacities of his disciples—thus do they attend upon their heavenly lessons with meekness, reverence, love, and joy.

Discipleship with Christ may justly be conceived of both as an honour and privilege. It is an honour if we consider the dignity and glory of the promised Messiah: Such are not only instructed by Moses and the prophets, but by Jesus the mediator of the new covenant. To be his disciple is to stand in the most intimate and endeared relation to that glorious personage, to whom the prophets bore their united testimony: It is to be under his defence and protection at present, and finally to receive

ceive the most public marks of his approbation and favour. It will appear hereafter to be no small honour to stand in this relation to the Son of God; when he shall come in the clouds; when he shall raise the dead; when he shall judge the world, and receive up into glory his faithful followers, that where "he is, there they may be also."

SERM.
VI.

Having considered the nature of this relation of discipleship with Christ—we proceed,

II. To the evidence or proof of its genuineness. "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Many call and profess themselves Christians who are not so in reality and truth; they have a name to live while they are dead; and assume the form but are ignorant of the power of godliness. The religion of such is not seated in the heart; they have no root in themselves; the warmth of their zeal is generally

SERM.
VI.

nerally directed to the externals of religion, while they lay more stress upon the traditions of men, than the commandments of God. They are ambitious to support a mode of worship, and a system of mere speculative notions, while there is a sad disregard to that truth and righteousness which constitute the essence of true religion.

Many make a profession of Christianity who do not—*continue* in the word of Christ. They are fickle and inconstant in their religious sentiments; as the apostle expresses it, “they are carried away with every wind of doctrine;” struck with novelty, borne away by passion, and carried down the stream of error and corruption. Such is the fleeting nature of their goodness, that it may fitly be compared to the “morning cloud and early dew which soon passes away.” They are warm and zealous professors for a time, but when “troubles and persecutions arise
“because

“because of the word, they are offend-
“ded,” and draw back to perdition.

SERM.
VI.

They continue in their professed regards to the gospel, while such a profession does not incommode their external ease, but when tribulation cometh they betray its interests, and no longer steadfastly adhere to it. They continue in Christ's word while it does not contradict their favourite inclinations, but when it calls them to the duties of self-denial and suffering, they no longer acknowledge its authority: but instead of proving themselves his disciples *indeed*, they give melancholy evidence of being his enemies by wicked works.

By continuing in Christ's word, we may understand an habitual regard to the authority of Christ; a profession of his faith in all the circumstances and events of life, and an obedience to his will when there are strong temptations to violate his laws. A continuance in the word of Christ will express itself by a

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reverential

SERM.

VI.

reverential attendance upon religious ordinances. The disciples of Christ have been taught of him to assemble together for the sacred purposes of social worship. Religious ordinances being intended for their mutual edification and comfort; it is very unbecoming in them to slight those seasons of sacred instruction. It is their duty to bear their public testimony to the truth of the gospel by a personal and public attendance upon these institutions. It is their duty to honour their Lord and Master by holding communion with his church and people. A meek, humble, and devout disciple will welcome the return of such sacred seasons—he will rejoice when it is said unto him, “come let us go up unto the house of the Lord.”

If we continue in the word of Christ, this reverential attendance upon Christian ordinances will be accompanied with a correspondent obedience to the moral

moral precepts of our holy religion. SERM.
VI.
The religion of a true disciple of Jesus is not confined within the limits of the sanctuary, or the boundaries of a sabbath: it will give law to the future conversation and deportment. Such will make conscience of an impartial respect to all God's commandments. They will not conceive of themselves at liberty to gratify any of their irregular inclinations; on the contrary they are bound by the most solemn ties to persevere in an uniform and faithful obedience. They are bought with a price, and are no longer their own. The glory of their Redeemer is the great object of their aim and pursuit; and they esteem themselves happy in being instrumental in advancing it, whether by doing or suffering his will.

Those continue in the word of Christ who habitually obey his authority; who publicly assert the honour of his name; who conscientiously imitate his perfect

P 2 example,

SERM.
VI.

example, and who by the aid of divine grace, persevere in the same even unto the end.

Having considered the nature of this relation to Christ, together with the evidence or proof of its genuineness; we now come to the third head of discourse, viz.

III. The felicity which stands connected with this relation of discipleship with Jesus: "Ye shall know the truth; and the truth shall make you free."

A desire of knowledge strongly actuates the human mind; it is this which prompts to the invention of arts, and the investigation of science: it is this which declines the acquisition of wealth, which separates from the cares and emoluments of life, which immures in the closet those men of speculation, to whom we are indebted for the most laborious researches, and the most ingenious

nious and useful discoveries. But the commercial and literary pursuits of life are not solely to employ our intelligent powers; we must be careful to direct them to higher objects, and to the acquisition of knowledge, religious and divine. It is a matter of the last moment that we acquaint ourselves with the nature of our spiritual condition, and those higher relations in which we stand to an invisible and eternal world: that our minds be so impressed and affected with these relations as to secure a conduct every way correspondent to such high and holy expectations.

SERM.
VI.

This is the felicity of all those who stand in the above relation to Christ, that they are instructed in the most important truth, and the truth thus apprehended, frees them from the most painful and ignominious bondage.

I. They are instructed in the knowledge of the most necessary and important

SERM.
VI.

ant truth. Error and absurdity have been the general characteristics of all the systems of religion which are merely human—a consideration which should teach us to prize the seasonable and heavenly instructions of a divine revelation. Human nature, after the exertion of its most vigorous efforts, has been unequal to the production of a system of truth, freed from the mixture and defilement of error. After being ing mortified by its own insufficiency, displayed in the uncertainty and darkness of the wisest philosophers ; after our race had gone astray wandering in the mazes of a vain imagination, Heaven lends an auspicious aid, and vouchsafes “a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.”

This light has been breaking forth with a gradually increasing lustre : confined, during the Mosaic dispensation, within narrow limits, and concealed in part, under a thick cloud of types and prophecies,

prophecies, carnal ordinances, and beggarly elements; at length, under the glorious dispensation of the gospel, it has shone out with meridian splendour. The disciples of Jesus have been treated as his friends, their Lord has told them all things; all things respecting his character and kingdom, which it is necessary for them to know.

SERM.
VI.

They know the nature of the Messiah's kingdom. They believe in Jesus as the faithful and true witness; truth in a very eminent sense came by him, and at his hands they thankfully receive it. They are not offended at the meanness of his parentage, the poverty of his life, or the weakness or ignominy of his death. They are persuaded of the truth and divinity of his mission, and that no man can do the works which he did, except he came from God: His miracles, character, and doctrine, will not suffer them to conceive of him as a deceiver of the people.

They

SERM.
VI.

They understand the spiritual nature of his kingdom; they are instructed in its mysteries; they know that it is not of this world; that it does not promise its wealth or grandeur; that it stands in no need of its favour and protection; and that it is not to be shaken by the most violent exertions of its malice or violence. They know its laws, and most cordially submit to its divine authority. They are acquainted with those truths which holy men of old were ignorant of, or saw only obscurely, and at a distance. They have received the substance of former shadows, the accomplishment of ancient prophecies: They have seen the destruction of Jerusalem, the calling of the Gentiles, and the scattering of the Jews through the various tribes and nations of the earth.

They are instructed in the certainty of Christ's second coming, and the nature and end of his appearance: they know that he shall make the clouds his chariot,

chariot, and that he shall come to judge the world in righteousness. They know the nature of that scheme of grace which is delineated in the gospel. They are fully instructed in the offices and character of a glorious Mediator, and how blessed a thing it is, to approach the Father in his name. They are acquainted with the efficacy of that blood which cleanseth from all sin, and the powerful aid of that spirit which is promised to help our infirmities, to enlighten our understandings, and to sanctify our hearts.

SERM.
VI.

“They know the truth,”—those various branches of divine truth, in the knowledge of which standeth their eternal life. The disciples of Jesus may not be acquainted with the controversies of the schools, or the metaphysical distinctions of philosophical divines; a knowledge that rather puffs up, than edifies. The conceit of ignorance may be pleased with the jargon of unintelligible

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SERM.
VI.

gible sounds, and may be filled with admiration of what it does not understand; but a true disciple of Jesus Christ is guided in judgment; is instructed in the meekness of wisdom, and receives divine truth in its simplicity, as delivered by Jesus and his apostles. The relation in which a disciple stands to Jesus is very favourable both to the knowledge and practice of the truth. His conceptions are enlarged, his judgment is convinced, and the affections of his soul are subjected to the authority of divine truth. In this sense it is that the truth may be said to make him free; which leads me to observe,

II. A true disciple of Jesus Christ is set at liberty from a very disgraceful bondage, by the sanctifying power of divine truth. His knowledge of the gospel is of a purifying nature; he does not "imprison the truth in unrighteousness," neither does he make "shipwreck of a good conscience." He
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is delivered into the mould of this truth; his temper and conduct are formed upon the plan which the gospel prescribes; he is taught to imitate a perfect pattern, to submit himself to the most wise and wholesome precepts, and to wait in the patient and cheerful expectation of eternal joy and felicity. The knowledge which he has of divine truth is productive of the fruits of universal holiness. Such a one does not merely profess the truth, but he is uniformly actuated by it; he feels its power, submits to its authority, and makes conscience of conforming himself to its sacred dictates. Having embraced the truth, his soul is enlarged, and his affections are spiritualized.

SERM.
VI.

The liberty of which he is now a partaker, consists in a freedom from the seduction of error. Errors in religion have a pernicious influence upon the sentiments and affections of the human heart. They lead us astray into the wilds

SERM.
VI.

of enthusiasm, or plunge us into the depths and horrors of superstition. They lead us to false conceptions of ourselves, and of that scheme of mercy which is published in the gospel. They lead us to think of ourselves above what we ought to think. They mutilate the gospel, destroy its simplicity, and lead us to lay an inordinate stress upon those things which are of no great price in the sight of God. They countenance acts of will worship, and "teach for doctrines the commandments of men." A true disciple of Jesus Christ is freed from the bondage of these errors; the fervour of his devotion is scriptural and rational; his worship is spiritual, a reasonable service; and his trust in the grace of God through Christ is a regular confidence. He turns not the grace of God into lasciviousness. He is freed from painful doubts and suspicions respecting these things of which it is desirable to have a full assurance: he possesses his soul in patience and fortitude, while

while others are easily moved from their confidence ; he experiences internal satisfaction and joy, while others are disquieted, dejected, and comfortless. His prejudices are subdued : His high thoughts are brought into subjection, and he is no longer disturbed by the disquieting suggestions of scepticism and infidelity.

SERM.
VI.

By the sanctifying power of divine truth, a disciple of Jesus is likewise freed from the "dominion and tyranny of irregular passions."

These passions blind the understanding, pervert the judgment, and subject the superior powers of our nature to a most inglorious bondage. When they have gained the ascendancy over reason and conscience, they lead us captive at their pleasure : such is their impetuosity, that they afford no leisure for sober reflection ; and in proportion as men give themselves up to their authority, they

SERM.
VI.

they will make a rapid and most fearful progress in every evil work. If conscience is not entirely dethroned, which is rarely the case, there will be a perpetual discord in the human breast; and whenever a season for reflection returns, it brings a sentence of condemnation with it; it reads the most humiliating and even terrifying remonstrances, and pierces the soul with many sorrows. But it is not thus with a true disciple of Jesus Christ. His knowledge of the truth so impresses his mind and affects his heart, that former irregularities are now rectified: he puts away from him vain thoughts, and all those practices which are inconsistent with the dictates of divine truth. He is now freed from an habitual subjection to sin and folly; and it is his daily business to watch and pray, that he may not fall by the surprise of temptation. Being thus freed from the jarring interference of contrary passions, he rejoices in the testimony of a good conscience, and

and experiences that peace of God **SERM.**
which passeth all understanding. **VI.**

Such are making a daily progress in the various branches of rectitude and sanctification; they are going from one degree of holiness to another; "their path is as the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect perfect day."

'Those disciples who continue in the word of Christ, are blessed above all men: they have consolations peculiar to themselves; the comforts with which they are comforted of God. The felicity which stands connected with discipleship with Christ is not to be described; but you may trace it in the temper and life of that Christian, who is "steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

SERMON VII.

ON THE WISDOM THAT IS FROM ABOVE.

JAMES iii. 17.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

SERM.
VII.

WE have here a very pleasing and striking description of the characters and properties of true religion. It is termed *wisdom*; a wisdom which cometh from above; and which stands opposed

opposed to the erroneous principles and maxims of a sensual and worldly policy. SERM.
VII.
It must be distinguished from the mere acquisition of knowledge, since it consists in the application of knowledge to the most worthy and benevolent purposes. A speculative religion, separate from its sanctifying influence on the heart, frequently inspires with pride and censoriousness; which was evidently the case with some professors whom the apostle is here addressing. "Who," says he, *ver.* 13. "is a wise man, and endued with wisdom among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his work with meekness of wisdom." But if ye are persons of an envious and contentious spirit, glory not. Ye have rather reason to be ashamed; for the wisdom of which you make your boast is earthly and sensual; it puffeth up with pride, and becomes the parent of strife, tumult, and confusion. "But
"the wisdom that is from above, is first
"pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy
R "to

SERM. "to be intreated; full of mercy and good
VII. "fruits, without partiality, and with-
"out hypocrisy."

The properties of that wisdom which descendeth from above, are here enumerated; on each of which we may now fix our devout meditations.

I. The purity of this principle is, *first*, to be considered; which describes the sanctity of its nature, as opposed to the defilement of vice and folly. The wisdom from above resembles the holiness of its divine Parent, the Father of lights; submitting all its maxims and designs to the rules of truth and goodness. Wherever it presides in the heart of man, it regulates the thoughts, and purifies the passions. It prohibits every species of intemperance and excess, and excludes from its administration all those principles of an earthly policy which corrupt and disgrace the wisdom of this world. That purity which is a
characteristic

characteristic of true religion, is a general principle, diffusing its influence through the whole of our temper and deportment: it sanctifies the secret motives of the heart, and regulates those internal springs of action, which are out of the reach of human observation. Under its influence we shall carefully abstain from vain thoughts, and all those scenes which might defile our imaginations. Our external conduct will be uniformly influenced by those principles which are upright and honourable, and nothing will be admitted inconsistent with the dictates of conscience and religion.

SERM.
VII.

The wisdom of this world leads to a deportment the reverse of this; the conversation which it countenances is founded on duplicity and corruption; and it deems nothing criminal which may flatter the designs, and succeed the projects of its ambition or sensuality.

This wisdom is from beneath, and ac-

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knowledges

SERM. VII. knowledges principles the most corrupt and erroneous: it holds fellowship with the works of darkness, and authorises deeds that are wicked and licentious. On the other hand, the wisdom from above is incorrupt and pure; it refines and dignifies the soul of man, and hushes into silence all that tumult which is excited in the breast by unhallowed passions.

II. Another property of true religion is peaceableness: "The wisdom from above is first *pure*, then *peaceable*."

It is the character of folly to be impertinent and contentious, but those who are wise will carefully avoid every occasion of strife and bitterness. They will keep clear of those broils in which others are incautiously and unnecessarily involved; they will be careful to carry themselves with an air of reserve, not being forward to intermeddle with affairs in which they have no proper or
immediate

immediate concern. Thus far persons may doubtless be actuated by prudence and good policy.

SERM.
VII.

But the truly religious follow the things that make for peace on yet nobler principles—from a regard to conscience and piety. They are disposed to a peaceable deportment by the commands of heaven; by the pattern of their Saviour; and by the power of Christian faith and virtue. They are destitute of that pride and envy, of that ambition and jealousy, which excite in others the most unfriendly passions, and which disturb the harmony of social intercourse. They are not anxious to demand a particular explanation of every thing that wears a suspicious appearance; “they leave off contention before it be meddled with, knowing that the beginning of strife, is as when one letteth out water.”* Its progress is exceedingly swift and impetuous, and will soon bear down the feeble barriers of

* Proverbs xvii.

SERM.
VII.

of peace and order. The greater our progress in divine wisdom, the more inoffensive and peaceable will be our temper and deportment. The God whom we worship and are bound to imitate, is the *Author* of peace, and the *Lover* of concord ; the laws of that religion which we profess to obey, command us to lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty. The Author and the Finisher of the Christian faith was both the messenger and the pattern of peace. When he left our world, this was the legacy which he bequeathed his disciples, " my peace I leave with you." This is the sacred benediction of the apostles : " The God of peace be with you all." " Peace be to the brethren." " Grace and peace be multiplied unto you."

This is the uniform language of their exhortations, " live peaceably with all men. The wisdom from above is peaceable in obedience to the orders of heaven,

ven, and in imitation of the example of our Lord and Saviour. It inspires the mind with those dispositions which in their nature and tendency are the most harmless and benevolent; which either prevent the first beginning of strife, or effectually check the violence of its progress, when it has began to prevail. The wisdom from above is a stranger to those scenes of tumult and confusion which agitate the malignant passions of mankind, and follows after peace in all its relations friendly, civil, and religious. It gives no offence to Jew, or Greek, or the church of God; and holds no contest except with those powers which attempt to seduce it into the paths of vice and error.

SERM.
VII.

The peace it maintains we must carefully distinguish from that friendship with the present world, which is at enmity with piety and holiness; for such a friendship it entirely declines, and fails not to exert itself in a steady opposition

SERM.
VII.

position to the errors and vices of wicked men and seducers. It is quiet and peaceable in all those instances in which it is possible to preserve undisturbed harmony, in connection with the interests of truth and godliness.

This peaceable disposition which true religion inspires, is productive of the happiest effects on society; so that civil communities are under great obligations to its benign influence for the preservation of that order and decorum which are enforced by the laws of the magistrate. It likewise carries with it its own reward in respect to individuals. A peaceable character is undisturbed in its enjoyments, and generally stands high in the favour both of God and man: "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God."

III. Gentleness is another property of true religion; which we may conceive
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of as the natural effect of its mild and
et pacific spirit. The wisdom from above
in is not austere in its temper, nor superci-
r- lious in its carriage, but its manners
ne are softened by humility, candour, and
charity. It is easy in its deportment,
and affable in its address; respectful to
ne superiors, familiar with equals, and kind
ne and condescending to those who are
vil placed in inferior stations. This spirit
a- of gentleness stands opposed to the vio-
e- lent outrage of passion; it suffereth
m long, and is kind; it is not easily pro-
ne voked, and never avengeth its own in-
it juries for the sake of gratifying person-
ls. al pride and resentment. Even when
in suffering from the ill treatment of
ds others, it will be disposed to make every
nd proper allowance for those who have
s, offended; it will consider the complex-
of ion of their natural tempers, and also
those circumstances which may proba-
of bly have been misconstrued or misre-
ve presented. It will not be forward to
of give place to wrath, and more especial-

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SERM.
VII.

SERM.
VII.

ly will it avoid that excess of anger which is quite disproportioned to the nature of the provocation. If instances occur, in which it will be necessary to manifest a spirit of displeasure, such displeasure will be moderated by gentleness and meekness—in other words, “we shall be angry, and sin not.”

This gentleness which is a property of true religion, will likewise manifest itself in a meek submission to all the disposals of divine providence. It will not repine at the allotments of the Almighty, though its station in life be the most humiliating and obscure. It has no vain or ambitious projects which it wishes to execute ; it is modest and moderate in all its desires—pleased and contented with whatever situation providence thinks fit in its wisdom to ordain. It is more concerned to be useful in its present humble connections, than to aspire after those elevated stations, which however flattering to human

man vanity, might prove fatal to Christian faith and virtue.

SERM.
VII.

IV. This wisdom from above, which is thus gentle, meek, and submissive, is, in the fourth place, "easy to be entreated:" it is not of an obstinate, refractory disposition, but easy of access, open to conviction, and willing to be reconciled. It yields to the force of reason and truth; and is neither obstinate in its prejudices, nor implacable in its resentments. This wisdom from above is easy to be *entreated*, but not to be misled; it has a quick discernment of the things which differ, and is not to be imposed upon by the sophistry of error. It is ready to yield in all those cases where a compliance is just and reasonable, but on other occasions, it preserves a becoming firmness and fortitude. We must distinguish it from that easiness and pliability which readily accedes to every proposition: for this is a temper both dangerous and reproachful;

SERM.
VII.

which while it reflects a disgrace on the understanding, exposes the heart to every species of corruption. Young persons are more especially liable to this dangerous infirmity, on account of that disposition to be courteous and obliging, which is both the ornament and virtue of their tender age; but this disposition, however pleasing or commendable in itself, becomes weak and criminal, when it leads to those compliances which offend against the dictates of reason, and the laws of piety. The wisdom that is from above is easy to be *entreated*, but not be *corrupted*; in all cases where its integrity and virtue are assaulted, it preserves an invincible resolution and fortitude.

V. In the fifth place; other properties of this wisdom are compassion and liberality. "It is full of mercy and good fruits." The true spirit of religion inspires with benevolence, and those who are destitute of generous affections,

fections, must renounce their claim to that wisdom of which I am now speaking. Those are novices in religion; or rather I should say, they are totally ignorant of its sanctifying power, whose affections are contracted, or whose hearts are insensible to the welfare and happiness of their neighbours and brethren. If we have no bowels of compassion when we observe the poor and afflicted—when we see one bowed down under the troubles of life, and another perishing for want of its necessities, how dwelleth the love of God in us? With what decency or propriety can we in this case profess to be under the influence of that wisdom which is from above? We may have a mercenary or selfish prudence; a wisdom that enables us to accumulate wealth, or enlarge our possessions; a fleshly wisdom that is worldly and sensual; but this wisdom is from beneath—it is absorbed in an inordinate self-love; and looks not with an eye of favour and generosity on the welfare

SERM.
VII.

SERM. VII. welfare and happiness of others. The wisdom from above, on the other hand, while it enlightens the mind, warms also the heart with every kind and sympathetic emotion. It takes us to the mansion of poverty, and to the house of mourning, and strongly interests us in every sigh and tear of the afflicted. In the language of the apostle, it constrains us to weep with those that weep, to bear the burthens of our brethren in adversity, and so to fulfil the law of Christ.

It will not suffer us to content ourselves with mere expressions of sympathy, but it will also engage us according to our ability, liberally to contribute to the relief of the afflicted; which acts of compassion will be sanctified by a pious regard to the command of God, and the example of Christ, in connection with a spirit of benevolence and love.

VI. This

VI. This wisdom from above is like-
wise candid and “without partiality.”

SERM.
VII.

It does not accustom itself to a rash and censorious judging, but puts the most favourable construction upon the conduct of others. It is not prone to distrust or suspicion—on the other hand, “it thinketh no evil;” and if it must err, it wishes to be imposed upon by the blindness of charity, rather than by the unkindness of a malevolent prejudice. The judgment which it forms will not be biased by the external rank or condition of men, but by a pure regard to the integrity of their moral and religious principles. It will be without respect of persons, and thus may be distinguished from the wisdom of this world; a kind of wisdom which is strangely unequal in the estimation which it forms of men and things; a wisdom however politic or prudent, which is prejudiced by appearances, biased by interest, and awed by authority—a wisdom in its opinions, as unstable and uncertain as
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SERM. the fluctuating interests of emolument
 VII. and ambition.

VII. In the last place, The wisdom from above is “without hypocrisy.” This is nearly connected with the purity of that principle here mentioned by the apostle, as constituting one of the first properties of true religion. Insincerity is totally inconsistent with the simplicity and sanctity of that wisdom which is from above. Nor is it needed, for such wisdom has nothing to conceal; all its purposes are good and honourable, and all its practices just and beneficent: in its professions of piety, and in its connections with the world, it maintains a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man.

Is the above a just description of religious wisdom? how great its excellency, and how amiable its characters! It comes recommended to us by its purity and peaceableness; by its gentleness
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and integrity, and by all the kind and goodly fruits of compassion and liberality. None can charge it with sedition or envy, with pride or duplicity; or any other malevolent disposition. All its maxims are just and charitable; and all its ways are pleasantness and peace. Wherever it has fixed its residence in our world, it has produced effects the most salutary and beneficial. It has chased away thick clouds of darkness, checked the progress of error and corruption, calmed the rage of hostile passions, and softened the hearts of barbarians and savages.

SERM.
VII.

How thankful should we be for that gospel which fully instructs us in this heavenly wisdom; and for that Saviour in whose character it shone forth with the brightness of perfection! He is Christ the *wisdom*, as well as the *power* of God. In him it is displayed in the most inviting forms. How meek and majestic, how harmless and inoffensive,

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SERM.
VII.

how lowly and charitable! His instructions are the lessons of wisdom personified.

To conclude. Does this wisdom come from above, let us pray for its descent into our hearts. Let us make supplication to the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good gift, that he would illuminate our darkness, spiritualize our affections, and lead us to the right understanding of that divine word, in which are deposited the inexhaustable treasures of knowlege and wisdom. And to these our prayers, let us add that diligence, without which we shall remain in darkness, while the light shineth around us. Let us stand on our guard against every species of error and delusion, and the duplicity and corruption of a sensual policy. Let us abhor its principles, and renounce its maxims, having our conversation in the world, with that benevolence and integrity which become the gospel of the grace
of

of God. Let not that activity which generally characterizes the wisdom of this world, exceed that diligence which we ought to maintain in our high and holy calling. Let it no longer be our reproach, that the children of this world are in this respect wiser than the children of light. Let us embrace every opportunity of growing in knowledge and in grace, frequently reading those holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise to salvation, and constantly attending those public ordinances, which are designed by providence for our instruction in righteousness.

SERM.
VII.

May it appear to others, that we are possessed of this wisdom from above, by the meekness of our tempers, the moderation of our lives, and the peaceableness and purity of the whole of our deportment.

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SERMON

**SERM.
VII.**

May this wisdom guide our steps
through the labyrinth of life, and cheer
our souls in the awful hour of death—
which God, of his infinite mercy grant,
in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

ON THE HAPPINESS OF SUBMITTING TO
CHRIST'S YOKE.

MATTHEW xi. 29.

*Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me,
for I am meek and lowly in heart, and
ye shall find rest to your souls.*

“THIS is the language not merely
of authority, but of the most
condescending grace and compassion.”
Jesús beholding the multitude, is touch-
ed with the tenderest concern for their
welfare; he commiserates the hardships
to which they are exposed, under the
galling

SERM.
VIII.

150 *On the Happiness of submitting to Christ's Yoke.*

SERM.
VIII.

galling yoke of sensuality and superstition, and mercifully invites them to come to him, to submit to a discipline more easy and rational, and to partake of consolations more substantial and abiding.

Many are groaning under the heavy pressure of an intolerable burden. Anxious cares are distracting their minds; the suspicions of guilt are troubling their consciences; mortifying disappointments have broken their spirits, and the prospect of death overwhelms them with despondency. This is that burden of woe and sorrow which is imposed upon the vassals of folly and sin—a burden the most disgraceful and intolerable, from which Jesus alone can set them free. This is that galling yoke of bondage which is broken off from the neck of his disciples. Henceforth they are engaged in obedience to that Saviour, whose service is perfect freedom

freedom, and in keeping whose com-
mandments there is great reward.

SERM.
VIII.

In the text, we are exhorted to the performance of a duty; and this duty is enforced by certain motives.

The duty itself is of large extent, and comprehends the whole of Christian obedience and submission. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me." In other words, submit to the laws of my religion, and tread in the footsteps of my example.

We are here commanded to take upon us the yoke of Christ. This, by an easy and natural similitude, conveys the idea of our dutiful submission to the Son of God—a submission which is founded on every principle of justice and gratitude, and to which we are obliged by that public profession which we here make of the Christian religion.

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SERM.
VIII.

The restraints which are laid upon us by the authority of Jesus, are the most reasonable and salutary; instead of depriving us of any species of real enjoyment, they make a most important addition to our happiness. The duties he enjoins, are such as originate in our character and circumstances, and those different relations in which divine providence has immediately placed us. Piety and penitence, faith and charity, these are the obligations of the Christian religion; in the observance of which we engage in a service, the most reasonable and delightful; a service which carries with it its own reward, and which becomes comparatively easy, with the seasonable assistance of divine grace, in connection with a habit of religion and piety. In our submission to the son of God, we do not take upon us a yoke of bondage, like that of the Jews, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear; we are not called to the practice of those numerous rites which were instituted

instituted by the Deity under a former dispensation: but our worship as Christians is simple and spiritual, and the obedience required by the authority of the gospel is most free and ingenuous. Its commission is opened not amidst the awful terrors of Mount Sinai, but encompassed with the milder glories of Mount Zion. We hear no thunder; we see no lightning. These are the gentle accents of the gospel—*“Peace on earth, good will towards men, glad tidings of great joy which shall be to all people.”*

The submission to which we are here exhorted, must become peculiarly agreeable and pleasing, under the influence of such gracious powers. We are allured to this obedience by motives of affection, as well as the obligations of reason and duty. In this submission we conscientiously acknowledge the divine authority of Jesus Christ; we receive him as the only begotten of the Father,

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and

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SERM. and look up to him with humility, ve-
 VIII.
 { neration, and gratitude.

But it is to be remembered, and we should reflect upon it with thankfulness, that we are not only obliged to obey his authority, but are likewise commanded to imitate his pattern. The perfection of his example not only serves as a rule of duty, but also suggests the most powerful motives to the practice of piety and true religion.

This is the language of our blessed Saviour: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me."

There are teachers who say and do not; who will bind heavy burdens upon their followers, but will not touch them with one of their fingers; who will deliver excellent doctrine, and enjoin on men the most wholesome precepts, but who at the same time stand exposed to that bitterest of sarcasms, "Physician, heal

heal thyself." This was the case with some public characters in the Jewish church, especially at the time of our Saviour's appearance. In that age of hypocrisy and corruption, he taught with the authority of conscious innocence, and familiarized by his example the most difficult duties of humiliation and suffering. The precepts of his gospel are most powerfully recommended through all ages, by the pattern of his own life and manners; here you will find them literally transcribed, and that in characters the most sublime and captivating. Of him you may learn piety towards God, benevolence towards men, and all those private virtues and excellencies, which are the dignity and perfection of a human character.

SERM.
VIII.

In the life of our Redeemer there are the most lively impressions of an entire devotedness to his heavenly Father. The whole of his life was a scene of voluntary and chearful obedience to his

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pleasure;

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VIII.

pleasure; it was this that determined his holy soul on every occasion of self-denial and suffering. This was manifest in a series of unerring and perfect obedience, in the fulfilment of all righteousness, both ceremonial and moral; in the worship of the temple, and in the secret retirement of meditation and prayer. He withdrew from the converse, and often from the applause and admiration of mortals, to hold communion with his Father in heaven; and he was frequently engaged at midnight, and in the mountains, in the secret offices of the most exalted devotion.

The piety which we are commanded to learn of our Saviour, is in every respect the most refined and sublime: it is free from all that corruption and error which are so frequently blended in the devotion of mortals. In it there are no traces of an irrational warmth, or of a superstitious rigour: it was a sacred principle that animated his soul, and uniformly

uniformly influenced his whole deport-
ment—not violent in its operations, but SERM.
VIII.
steady and fervent in its tendencies and
attachments—not morose in its disposi-
tion, nor censorious in its judgment,
but always mild, candid, and beneficent.
We are to learn of our Redeemer, a
kind of piety very different from that
which is cherished and recommended
by some that call themselves his follow-
ers—a kind of piety which does not to-
tally separate us from the world, but
which qualifies us for the amiable and
useful discharge of the several duties of
our respective stations—a piety which
neither sours the temper, nor hardens
the heart; but which, on the other
hand, softens the harshness of our pas-
sions, and enriches our minds with the
most benevolent affections. Of him we
learn the happy union of devotion and
charity—a devotion that first goes and
reconciles us to our neighbour, and then
leaves its gift at the altar—a devotion
that expels from its sacred fellowship,
“ all

SERM. "all malice and envy, all wrath and
 VIII. evil speaking, with every species of
 strife and bitterness."

We learn of Jesus not only piety towards God, but benevolence to men. This, if I may so speak, was the passion predominant in his heart, and that exerted itself with such energy through the several scenes of his earthly existence. The benevolence of his character was fully evinced, by the general design of his appearance in our world: and it was afterwards manifested in his ministry and miracles. It was no characteristic of his ministration to execute upon our race any formidable judgments; on the other hand, we are told, "that he went about doing good." He was more immediately employed in acts of mercy, generosity, and kindness; in opening the eyes of some that were blind, in healing the diseases of others that were sick; in causing the lame to walk, the dumb to speak, and in restoring

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ing life to those who had fallen by the hand of death. SERM.
VIII.

How many houses of mourning were turned into joy, by the power and beneficence of the blessed Jesus! How many weeping and disconsolate parents has he comforted? How many widows and fatherless children has he succoured? Who can inform us of the innumerable instances in which he eased the pains, and relieved the necessities of the distressed and indigent; in which he wiped away tears from the eyes that refused to be comforted by any other hand? What high ideas should we form of his benevolence, could we trace all the footsteps of his mercy and charity through the several walks of his earthly pilgrimage?

This divine affection extended itself beyond the boundaries of his more intimate connections, and was exerted on every proper occasion for the relief of
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SERM.
VIII.

human distress and woe. It is more especially manifest in the awful solemnities of his last sufferings; where it partakes of properties peculiar to itself, and comes recommended by certain considerations of freedom and generosity, which are not common among men.

Would we then be instructed in humanity and charity, where can we learn these divine lessons to such advantage and perfection, as in the example of our Lord and Saviour? His character in this, and every other particular, is the most exalted and complete. How ought we, as his disciples, to imitate the overflowing benevolence of his heart, and to cherish the most free and disinterested love of our brethren and fellow-creatures. If we learn of him, and are determined by the sacred principles of his conduct, we must no longer rest satisfied with those partial affections which lead us to be kind only to those who do good to us, but we must likewise
restrain

restrain every malevolent disposition and passion, even towards such as have despised and injured us. This most difficult lesson is to be learned at the cross of our expiring Redeemer, where we hear the most compassionate language uttered in the midst of that distress which he was then suffering from the hands of his enemies, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

SERM.
VIII.

We are to learn of Jesus not only piety and charity, but meekness and humility, self-denial, and fortitude; patience and resignation. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor; he was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Shall any of his followers then be proud and ambitious, fretful or impatient? Shall such presume to arraign the conduct of Providence, under the various afflictions and misfortunes of life? This is at once a violation of duty, and a contradiction

SERM. to the example of their blessed Lord.
 VIII. } Pride and passion, impatience and revenge, we may be instructed in by the maxims of this world, but not by the principles of the grace of God. In the school of our Redeemer, we learn no manners but such as are gentle, mild, and charitable. We are there taught to be pitiful and courteous, to be tender-hearted and forgiving, and meekly to resign ourselves to all the events and dispensations of Providence.

How far we have complied with the exhortation in the text, is a weighty question, and deserves the most serious and impartial examination. Have we taken upon us the yoke of Christ, or are we the servants of another master? Is our conduct regulated by the laws of his kingdom, or by the unequal maxims of a sinful world? Have we submitted to Jesus, or are there other lords who continue to have dominion over us? Have we been with him, and imbibed
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his spirit, or are we the votaries of ambition, sensuality, and avarice? His servants we are to whom we obey—his disciples of whom we learn.

SERM.
VIII.

If we receive our instructions in the school of fashion, caprice, and fancy; if we are determined in our conduct by the ungenerous impulse of corrupt passion, or the unjust dictates of worldly policy, what pretensions have we to the Christian character, or why should we affect to be called by a name so venerable and sacred? That heart that is swollen with pride; that breast that is heated with revenge, or burning with a flame of unhallowed passion, has no right to tread his courts, to declare his statutes, or to take his covenant into his mouth. The prayer of such is an abomination to the Lord, and their profession of christianity equally vain and inconsistent. What communion has light with darkness, or the temple of God with idols?

SERM.

VIII.

If we call ourselves the followers of Jesus, it may naturally be expected that we should make conscience of imitating the perfection of his example. Conformity to this is the essence of religion; from hence it derives its worth and excellence; and if we say, "we abide in him, we ought also to walk even as he walked."

That we may be engaged to submit to the authority, and to conform ourselves to the example of Jesus Christ; let us consider,

II. Secondly, the motives by which the duty is enforced, to which we are here exhorted in the text: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

In persuading you to comply with this exhortation, I will, in the first place,

place, consider the condescension of **SERM.**
our Saviour's character: and then, **VIII.**

Secondly, insist on that rest and satisfaction, which accompany submission to the laws of his kingdom.

In the first place, learn of Jesus, since there is so much gentleness and condescension in his manners.—“He is meek and lowly in heart.” There is nothing forbidding in his air, nor haughty in his deportment; nothing that can discourage the most timorous disciples, or that has the least tendency to overwhelm their frailty with despair.

He is easy of access, mild in his aspect, and lowly and gentle in the whole of his deportment. He is estranged from that distance, reserve, and pride to which many teachers have been shamefully addicted. However excellent and wholesome their instructions, these have been rendered useless to others, merely
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SERM.
VIII.

by the severe and lofty air with which they have been administered. But humble Christians feel no such discouragements from the temper and address of our blessed Saviour. In respect to those disciples who were favoured with his converse in the days of his flesh, he was ready, on every proper occasion, to remove their fears, to resolve their doubts, and to give them all that satisfaction and encouragement which could be reasonably expected or desired. He spoke to them as his friends, and healed their ignorance, prejudice, and follies, with the greatest lenity and candour. He was not in the least inclined to censure their frailties, or to sit in judgment upon their offences. Could they not watch with him at a season when friendship ought to have been most wakeful? His candour immediately offers an apology on their behalf: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Are they slow of heart to believe, and is it difficult to overcome the obstinacy

obstinacy of their prejudices? He patiently endures this frowardness, and by various methods repeatedly endeavours to open their understandings. On every occasion he manifested the greatest meekness and condescension; and this is a reason why we should learn of him, and an encouragement to the most weak and timorous, to place themselves immediately at his feet. He does not despise the day of small things; the bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench. He condescends to teach the meanest of his disciples, and the greater their weakness, in that proportion may they expect his compassion to abound. "The meek will he guide in judgment, the meek will he teach his way."

SERM.
VIII.

Let us immediately take upon us the yoke of Christ, since we need not fear any rigorous impositions, any harsh requirements, or any thing inconsistent with that gentleness which renders him

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SERM.
VIII.

so amiable throughout all his churches. In our obedience to other masters, we have much to apprehend from the fickleness of their tempers, the irregularity of their passions, and that pride and resentment which they fail not to express on the most trivial occasions. But that Jesus, whose authority we profess to acknowledge, is uniformly of a meek and lowly spirit. Nor can an instance possibly be produced, in which any of his followers were oppressed by him. The thought is blasphemous; the bare mention of it strikes our minds with horror. For his commandments are not grievous; "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light." So eminent was Jesus for the meekness of his temper, that he even endured the contradiction of sinners against himself; the greatest provocations could not excite in his breast any outrage of passion, nor could the most aggravating contradictions extort from his lips any malignant threatening. If this was his mild behaviour

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to his enemies, what gentleness and condescension may we not expect from him towards his friends ! “ Take then his yoke upon you, and learn of him, for he is meek and lowly in heart.”

SERM.
VIII.

But in persuading you to this, I not only insist on the gentleness of his manners, but also,

II. On that rest and satisfaction which accompany obedience to his authority and government. This is that other argument suggested in the text, by which the above duty is enforced: “ Ye shall find rest to your souls.”

Rest and happiness are the natural desire of the human mind ; and this is the universal language of the soul—
“ Who will shew us any good ? ” The means of attaining it are generally varied, according to the caprice of men's different inclinations. One seeks his supreme felicity in the gratification of
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VIII.

his ambitious desires; another in the sensual indulgence of his passions; and another in the mercenary acquisition of wealth; but a secret dissatisfaction is the general issue of all these experiments. The hurry of business, the dissipation of vanity, and even the more refined pursuits of literature. All of them loudly confess to man—"These are not your rest." The proper rest of the soul is most effectually promoted by an obedience to the authority, and imitation of the pattern of Jesus Christ. Faith in his religion, and subjection to its laws, administer to the mind that peace and pleasure which cannot be derived from any other quarter. No system of human philosophy, let it be ever so improved and exalted, can impart those consolations to the heart of man, which flow from the genius of the Christian covenant. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, and ye shall find rest to your souls." Ye shall no more be disquieted by the doubts of scepticism,

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the despair of guilt, the tyranny of your passions, nor the terrors of death.

SERM.
VIII.

1. On our submission to Jesus Christ, we receive him as a heavenly and divine teacher.

In this sacred capacity, he frees us from the speculations of infidelity and scepticism. He is the only begotten of the Father, who has made the most explicit revelation of his will; who has not left us at any uncertainty respecting those truths with which we have the most intimate and important concern. The immortality of the soul, a future state of retribution, the means of peace and reconciliation with God—these are all most clearly revealed by the gospel of our Saviour Jesus Christ. While the mind continues in a state of suspense respecting these most important articles, it must necessarily be estranged from ease and rest. Full information would resolve its doubts, and quiet its fears;

SERM.
VIII.

and this information is received at the hands of that Jesus, with whom are deposited all the treasures both of wisdom and knowledge.

2. Further, we are authorized to look up to him as our Saviour and Mediator; which consideration frees us from that despair which naturally accompanies a consciousness of guilt. In our submission to Jesus Christ, we not only acknowledge his authority as a teacher, but the efficacy of his death as a sacrifice for sin; he has given his life a ransom for many, and has died the just for the unjust, to bring us nigh unto God. His blood cleanseth from all sin, and through him offending and guilty creatures are admitted to the divine favour and acceptance. What consolation flows to the humble penitent from this view of the meditation of Jesus!

A mind affected with a humble sense of its unworthiness and guilt, and at the same

same time impressed with lively con-
ceptions of the purity and rectitude of
the divine government, would stand in
need of the most express assurances of
pardon and acceptance on its penitence
and contrition.

SERM.
VIII.

This necessity would be increased in proportion to that humility and modesty which dreads above all things a spirit of presumption. But the tumult immediately subsides, and every fear is banished from the breast, on that amazing discovery of the divine love, which is peculiar to the mediation and sacrifice of that Redeemer, who is able to save unto the utmost, all that come unto God by him.

3. On our submission to Jesus Christ, we are not only freed from the anxiety of scepticism, and the terrors of despair, but also from the tyranny of unhallowed passions. These frequently excite the most fearful storms in the human breast.

SERM.
VIII.

breast. Their interests are jarring, their pursuits violent, and the issue full of disgrace and misery. But under the influence of our Redeemer's authority and grace, these rebellious passions are reduced to subjection; and the clamour of wrath, lust, and ambition is hushed into silence. Natural desires are restrained within the boundaries of reason and piety, and order and harmony are established in the soul.

4. In the last place. On our submission to Jesus Christ, we shall finally be freed from the tribulations of life, the terrors of death, and introduced to a state of everlasting rest.

He, as the Lord of life and glory, is conducting us to realms of bliss and joy. He is gone before to provide mansions for us in his Father's house. When he has fixed his disciples there, they shall, in a very eminent and even heavenly sense, rest from their labours. A total
period

period shall then be put to their days of SERM.
VIII.
mourning, disquietude, and trouble: every tear shall be wiped from their eyes, and every sorrow banished from their breasts. They shall no more be affected by the uncertainty and vicissitude of a sinful world, or any of the painful revolutions that take place in it. They are now called to uninterrupted peace and joy.

The prospect of such a rest may afford consolation to the persecuted and afflicted disciples of Christ. In the world they may have tribulation, but in Jesus they have peace; a peace of which no external power can deprive them.

Thus in persuading you to an obedience to the Saviour, I have insisted upon those motives which are suggested in the text. He is meek and lowly in heart, and disposed to compassionate our ignorance and frailty. There is nothing to intimidate the weak, or even drive

176 *On the Happiness of submitting to Christ's Yoke.*

SERM.
VIII.

drive the guilty to despair. He is able to save unto the utmost, all that in the exercise of faith and penitence come unto God by him.

You then that are weary and heavy laden, that are perplexed with disquieting cares and fears, that are subjected to the galling yoke of sin, and groaning under the intolerable bondage of iniquity; why should you keep a melancholy and even fatal distance from that Saviour, who is alone able to ease you of your burden, and vouchsafe rest to your souls. Hear the inviting language of his grace: "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out. If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely."

SERMON

SERMON IX.

ON THE WISDOM WHICH DESCENDETH NOT
FROM ABOVE.

JAMES iii. 15.

*This wisdom descendeth not from above, but
is earthly.*

IN a former discourse, we contemplat-
ed the several properties of that
wisdom which is heavenly and divine,
and which is distinguished by its *purity*,
peaceableness, *sincerity*, and *charity*. But
it is another kind of wisdom, we are
now to contemplate; a wisdom desti-
tute

SERM.
IX.

SERM.
IX.

tute of these amiable qualities; which descendeth not from above, but is earthly. I mean not to enumerate all its properties, but shall confine your attention to the following, namely, its *duplicity* and *corruption*, its *pride* and *ambition*, its *prodigality* and *covetousness*.

I. This wisdom, which is earthly, is capable of arts the most corrupt and treacherous: it imbibes principles erroneous and depraved, and adopts maxims altogether repugnant to truth and virtue. The scheme of its morality has a sole regard to external actions, and is only calculated to preserve an apparent equity and decency. It lays a very great, and even immoderate stress upon all the punctilios of the external behaviour, but totally rejects a principle of integrity, as quite incompatible with its designs and projects. Dissimulation is one of the first principles of its system; and having formed a habit of deception, it at length practises the art with an
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air of frankness, and even perhaps without the least sense of its baseness and villainy. It does not shrink back from falsehood and treachery, and is ready to perpetrate the most atrocious deeds, in order to gratify the predominant passion of the heart.

SERM.
IX.

It lies in wait more especially to deceive the young and unsuspicious. It will flatter their prejudices, and easily impose on the natural pliability and honesty of their dispositions.

The form it assumes is that of a mild and pleasing insinuation, carefully concealing its ultimate intention, by the external appearance of generosity and candour. It will not at first shock their prejudices, but gradually undermine all their virtuous and pious principles. It will suggest some doubts respecting the providence and moral government of God, from thence it will proceed to invalidate the truth of revealed religion,

SERM.
IX.

representing it as a system of faith and manners, partaking of the rigour of superstitious strictness, and altogether inconsistent with the demands of our nature in its present state of frailty and passion. This artifice of earthly wisdom has often been practiced with too great success. Many have hereby been seduced into the paths of the destroyer. They have renounced the maxims of faith and virtue, and abandoned themselves to vices which have disgraced their characters, exhausted their fortunes, and involved their families in misery and shame. This earthly wisdom, so capable of duplicity, is often officious in its attentions and civilities: it makes many professions of devotedness and respect, and is ready to oblige on every possible occasion. But these are forms of mere customary address, and what is infinitely more criminal, are used as the means of engaging confidence, with a view to abuse so sacred a trust. In what a variety of instances might

might this be illustrated, and how easily
might we trace the pernicious consequences of such abominable artifice. It has made a prey of the virtue and reputation of individuals, and reduced them to a state of the most ignominious distress. It has also been so inhuman as to laugh at the calamities of those persons who have fallen victims to its deceit and treachery. In this respect its tender mercies have been cruelty, and herein it has been actuated by the very spirit of him, who was a deceiver and murderer from the beginning. In this connection we may adopt the language of the apostle,—“this wisdom cometh not from above, but is sensual and devilish.”

SERM.
IX.

As this principle is capable of duplicity and artifice, so it accommodates itself to those customs and maxims which are the most prevalent and fashionable; it is apparently pious, or openly licentious, according to the taste and humour
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IX.

of the age; it scruples no compliances for the gratification of its wishes, in the accomplishment of which it neither shrinks back from flattery nor treachery: for in its estimation these are venial faults, or even cease to be criminal, when they become necessary to the success of its projects.

II. This earthly wisdom is also characterized by *pride* and *ambition*. These are the principles by which it has been distinguished in all ages, and nothing but necessity has restrained the exertions of their outrage and violence. It treats inferiors with distance and contempt, taking an undue and even cruel advantage of their weakness or poverty. It loves to tyrannize within the boundaries of its own dominion, and fails not to oppress all those who are dependant on its authority. It is unwearied in its endeavours to increase its possessions, that thus it may gratify its vanity. One must give up his field, and another his vineyard.

vineyard. No principles too virtuous, SERM.
no ties too sacred, to be sacrificed at ^{IX.}
the altar of its pride and vain glory.

Of this we have melancholy and very affecting proof both from our own observation, and the annals of history. These turbulent tempers have violated the order, and destroyed the peace of civil society : they inspire with jealousy and envy, malice and resentment, and lie at the foundation of private diffensions and public animosities. Whence come wars and fightings in the world? come they not hence? even from the lusts of that earthly wisdom which is proud and ambitious? This wisdom presides in the councils of unrighteous princes, and blood-thirsty tyrants : it is this which forms those plans of victory and triumph so unfriendly to the liberties and lives of our fellow-creatures. It has slain its thousands, and enslaved its ten thousands; and destroyed at its pleasure the most valuable privileges, and

SERM. and dearest rights of human nature. It
 IX. is a part of its policy, neither to fear
 God, nor to regard man. It is superior
 to laws human and divine, and thinks
 itself justified in the practice of the
 grossest enormities.

Its furious progress has sometimes
 been checked by the evident interposi-
 tion of that providence which is able to
 restrain the "residue of its wrath."
 Though its politics be atheistical, they
 are nevertheless subjected to the con-
 trol of that God who ruleth over all.
 It is his prerogative to cast down and to
 lift up; to dispose of crowns and scept-
 ers at his pleasure, and to shake the
 foundations of thrones and empires.
 This earthly wisdom is foolishness with
 God, and he "takes it in the snare of
 its own craftiness."

It not only presides in the cabinets of
 princes, but in the more familiar com-
 merce of the world. It has private
 schemes

schemes of ambition and vanity, which it executes in the more retired scenes of life. It envies those of great fortune, and of large possessions, and inspires the mind with those lawless passions which defy the restraints of conscience and equity. It is a stranger to contentment and happiness, let its station be ever so elevated: it raises dreadful storms in the human breast, and spreads confusion and misery over the several parts of its tyrannical dominion. Pride and ambition having thus gained the ascendancy over the heart, are equally repugnant to personal enjoyment, social happiness, and the benevolent laws of the Christian religion.

SERM.
IX.

III. This earthly wisdom is likewise characterized by covetousness and prodigality. These are two extremes frequently exemplified in human life. The former, namely, covetousness, is a very mean and sordid passion—restless, impatient—and never contented with its

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present acquisitions. It is a stranger to generosity, benevolence, and hospitality, and unfriendly to every thing amiable and praise-worthy. In the language of the apostle, "it is the root of all evil," and prepares the mind for the practice of those arts, which are the most mean and dishonourable.

When this becomes the predominant passion, it seldom preserves itself within the boundaries of strict justice and equity: it invariably contracts the powers of the soul; hardens the heart, and renders it insensible to the pleasures of beneficence. It prefers the increasing accumulation of wealth, to the innocent and chearful enjoyment of those gifts which it has received from the hands of a very liberal providence. It with reluctance allows itself even the necessities of life, and as to generosity, it reprobates the idea, under the notion of prodigality and profuseness. Hereby it is rendered useless to society, and in
many

many cases becomes highly pernicious to its best interests.

SERM.
IX.

The wisdom that countenances this disposition is indeed earthly. The eye is pleased with the shining dust, while the heart is insensible to every call of humanity and charity. It justifies itself in this sordid passion, under the pretence of frugality and œconomy. It thinks that it knows the true value of riches, and is confirmed in its opinion by the foolish excesses of prodigality.

This worldly prudence chills every generous feeling of the soul: it is employed in schemes mercenary and selfish, and lives solely to the gratification of its own avaricious and sordid desires.

It is impressed with anxious distressing fears. Riches may take to themselves wings, and fly away: thieves may break through and steal; and it knows not for whom its wealth is accumulat-

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IX.

ing. It has no source of secret satisfaction—no blessing of the widow and fatherless, of the indigent and miserable to rest upon it. This earthly wisdom, when bowed down with the infirmities of age, is solitary in the world; has no friendly attachments; no charitable intercourse—no attendants except those few who are waiting with impatience for its final exit.

This wisdom which descendeth not from above, sometimes adopts the contrary extreme, and addicteth itself to the excesses of prodigality and licentiousness. An easy address in the circle of folly, with a certain refinement, even in its vices, are the principal objects of its concern and pursuit. Amusement and pleasure are its stated business; they do not return as occasional relaxations, but are the habitual employment of this trifling disposition. Its invention is racked to contrive new scenes of luxury and folly, that its senses and appetites may

may be more entirely absorbed in in-
temperate indulgencies. This disposi-
tion not only leads to the excessive pur-
suit of innocent pleasures, but prompts
to gratifications which are in themselves
criminal. That wisdom which is earth-
ly and sensual, defies the authority of
God and conscience; tramples on the
laws of virtue and decorum, and is nei-
ther awed by a sense of shame, nor
the fear of punishment. Its highest
attainment is to confound the nature of
moral good and evil, and to make no
other difference between virtue and
vice, than what is derived from the su-
perstitious prejudices of mankind.

SERM.
IX.

It persuades itself to disbelieve the
first principles of religion, and if it ad-
mits the existence of a God, it excludes
his moral inspection and government
from this part of the creation. It con-
fines its regards as much as possible
within the boundaries of the present
life, lest the apprehension of a future
state]

SERM. IX. state should interfere with its present ease and indulgence. This sensuality blinds the understanding, corrupts the heart, and renders it insensible to all the demands of faith and religion, as well as to all the obligations of justice and gratitude.

There are instances in which it is never awakened on this side the grave: it prospers in the world; and there are no bands in its death. But this is by no means generally the case. It does not always attain to this degree of obduracy. Some sudden affliction—some awful judgment—will suggest foreboding fears respecting futurity. “The wicked is driven away in his wickedness, while the righteous hath hope in his death.” This wisdom, which is earthly and sensual, cannot afford one consolation at this awful crisis: its reflections are dismal; its prospects terrifying.

These

These are some of the characteristics SERM.
IX.
of that wisdom which is earthly and sensual. Duplicity and corruption, pride and ambition, covetousness and licentiousness—these are its features. We ought to feel an abhorrence of it, and it is one branch of our practical improvement to see the deformity of the picture, and to be struck with horror at the display of its lineaments. Compare the wisdom which is earthly, with that which cometh from above. The one is dissembling and perfidious, the other pure, and without hypocrisy; the one is lowly, peaceable, and benevolent; the other proud, contentious, and mercenary. The one is full of good fruits; the other an enemy to all goodness.

As we ought to be inspired with an abhorrence of that wisdom which cometh not from above, so we should avoid all unnecessary familiarity with those who are actuated by no higher principle.

We

SERM.
IX.

We are obliged to an intercourse with the world in our different callings and professions; which intercourse we are not at liberty to decline, on any pretensions of exalted spirituality. Do you meet with men of genius and literature, of easy address, and polite manners, who are under the influence of no nobler principle than that wisdom which is earthly and sensual? Are you susceptible of pleasing impressions from the brilliancy of their wit, and their attainments in science—give them the praise due to their accomplishments, but be not charmed into their errors and vices. Learn not from this quarter to contemn revelation, as an irrational or superstitious system; or to take those liberties in conduct, which are inconsistent with the purity of Christian virtue.

Stand on your guard, lest you be prejudiced in favour of those practices which disgrace the most amiable of such characters. In your converse with them

them, never lose sight of the sanctions SERM.
IX.
of religion, and the eternal obligations
of moral virtue. “My son, if sinners
entice thee, consent thou not.” He
that walketh with wise men, shall be
wise; cast in your lot with such, even
with those that fear the Lord.

Finally, as a most effectual preserva-
tive from all the seductions of that wis-
dom which is earthly and sensual, let
us, by divine assistance, make a conti-
nual progress in that which cometh
from above. Whatsoever things are
true, just, lovely, and of good report, let
us think on those things; and shew, out
of a good conversation, our works, with
the meekness of wisdom. Wisdom,
under the gracious dispensation of the
gospel, crieth aloud, and lifteth up her
voice in the streets. Happy is the man
that hears her voice, and yields an un-
reserved submission to her authority.
She is more precious than rubies, and
all things thou canst desire, are not to

SERM. IX. be compared unto her—length of days
 is in her right hand, and in her left
 hand, riches and honour. She is a tree
 of life to them that lay hold upon her,
 and happy is every one that retaineth
 her. This wisdom from above, hea-
 venly and divine, elevates the thoughts,
 and sanctifies the passions. It inspires
 with a peace that passeth understanding,
 and with a joy that is unspeakable. It
 conducts with safety through the gates
 of death, and introduces to those man-
 sions of settled rest and unfading glory,
 which are promised by the infinite mer-
 cy of our God in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 Amen.

SERMON

SERMON X.

ON BROTHERLY LOVE.

HEBREWS xiii. 1.

Let brotherly love continue.

SUCH is the constitution of the human frame, and the frailty of our present condition and circumstances, that we are not only dependent on the great Author of our existence, but also upon one another. Necessity is one grand bond of human society : in such society we are capable of serving each others interests, and of performing

SERM.
X.

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SERM.

X.

those kind and equitable offices which are very beneficial to our common welfare. We cannot detach ourselves from this social intercourse, without injuring ourselves, and violating that order which both nature and reason seem to have established.

Those who affect to withdraw from society, are under a necessity of maintaining this commerce, if not immediately in their own persons, at least by the interposition and active services of some others. Our property is defended, and our necessities are supplied in the most expeditious and effectual manner by those communities which are universally established among all civilized nations. Such society is not only subservient to the general accommodation of life, but it humanizes the powers of our nature, imparts a delicacy to our feelings, and when governed by the principles of justice and benevolence, is productive of the highest human felicity.

Brotherly

Brotherly love is a principle the most SERM.
X.
favourable to the security and increase of this happiness; it is that good will and affection which we owe to each other, as “partakers of one common nature,” as “members of the same civil society,” and especially as “the disciples of our common Lord.”

Let brotherly love continue, since,

I. We are endued with one common nature. We derive our origin from the same source of power and goodness. We are all the offspring of God—he is the former of our bodies, and the Father of our spirits; he has endued us with the same rational powers, with similar inclinations and affections; “he hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth;” he has fashioned their hearts alike. In this sense we may conceive of ourselves as children of the same parent, and as members of one common family.

SERM.

X.

family. The circumstances of our situation are likewise similar; there are many advantages which we enjoy in common, and many comforts which no individual can appropriate to himself.

We are also exposed to the same frailty, liable to similar fears and woes; and our interests and sufferings being blended with each other, naturally suggest those mutual regards, which are sometimes ripened into a brotherly affection. The relation which subsists between the same order of beings, is of a very intimate and endearing kind. Those who are partakers of the same nature, and who dwell together in the same world, may be materially benefited by that good-will and affection which they bear to each other. One man, for instance, may be much profited by the benevolence or wisdom of another; it is often in our power to communicate happiness within the circle of our connections and acquaintance. If brotherly love is feated

ed in our hearts, we shall not want opportunities to express it; such is the condition of our fellow-creatures and brethren, that we may frequently manifest a charitable affection, by relieving the distressed, by sympathizing with the sorrowful, and by giving counsel to those who are in circumstances of suspense and embarrassment. SERM.
X.

What a pleasure must it be to a generous mind, to bear the infirmities of such as are weak, to administer consolation to those who are bowed down! He will be able to do this with the greatest advantage, being himself of the same nature, and having formerly been acquainted with similar circumstances of distress and sorrows. That heart which has been acquainted with the like bitterness, can most feelingly compassionate the sufferings others.

Since we are here in a state of similar infirmity; since we are exposed to like anxiety

SERM. X. anxiety and grief; and since Providence has qualified us for mutual offices of humanity and kindness—"let brotherly love continue."

Let us always cherish that generosity of mind, that delicacy of affection, which may render us sensible to the distresses of a brother, and which may quicken us to the ready and chearful performance of every good and benevolent work.

Let brotherly love continue, since,

II. This will promote the peace and welfare of that civil community of which we are members. This generous affection will entirely restrain us from every species of craft or violence; it will most effectually prevent all those violations of integrity and honour, which are so frequent among members of the same civil community; it will not suffer us to take an undue advantage of
of

of the weakness of a brother, but will SERM.
X.
invariably dispose us to do to others, as }
we would they should do to us. It will
lead us to the practice of every thing
virtuous and praise worthy in our civil
commerce with each other ; to provide
things fair, open, and honourable in the
sight of all men, and to forego a pri-
vate advantage for the sake of a more
public and universal good.

If brotherly love continue, we shall
be peaceable in our carriage, obliging
in our address, and uniformly observant
of that kindness and equity, which is
the grand basis of all social happiness.
When this mutual good-will generally
prevails among the members of the
same community, it administers strength
to the body politic ; it makes it a terror
to its foreign enemies, and gives it a
glory in the presence of those who
would wish to take the crown from its
head. This brotherly love is the strong-
est bond of our civil union ; it is our in-
ternal

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SERM.
X.

ternal strength, which, under providence, renders us superior to the designs and attacks of our most powerful enemies. But if, instead of the prevalence of this mutual good-will, animosities and discords are fomented in societies, they lose their importance and dignity, become less respectable in the eyes of others, and fall a sacrifice to those powers which could never have vanquished them, had they not first invited them to the conquest, by their domestic broils and discords. If then we regard the welfare of society, let us cherish that brotherly affection, which may put a stop to all unequal and dishonest practices, to every species of injustice and fraud; that brotherly affection which disposes to acts of generosity and kindness, and which has a natural tendency to establish universal order and harmony.

Let brotherly love continue, since,

III. We

III. We profess ourselves the follow-
ers and disciples of Christ. The Chris-
tian religion is a system of truth, which
strongly enforces brotherly affection; it
speaks very highly not only of love to
God, but also of love to our neighbour,
nay, it inseparably connects the one with
the other; and instructs us, that if we
love not our brother whom we have
seen, we cannot love God, whom we
have not seen.

SERM.

X.

“To love God with all the heart, and
our neighbour as ourselves,” is the re-
ligion of Moses and the prophets—the
religion of Jesus and his apostles. The
great Author of Christianity has, in this
respect, left us an example, that we
should follow his steps; he went about
doing good; he fed the hungry,
strengthened the weak, and administer-
ed consolation to those that mourned.
Survey the several parts of his life, and
you behold a scene of the most benevo-
lent compassion; his heart overflowed

SERM.
X.

with the most diffusive goodness; his hands were employed in the most generous and charitable services; and the whole of his deportment was worthy of himself, as "the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." His new commandment powerfully enforced by his own example is this; "that we love one another." This, if I may so speak, is the amiable badge of the religion we profess; by this we are to be known as his disciples; and a defect here will reflect no small dishonour on our Christian profession.

The nature of this sacred and generous affection, is best known to those who have been taught of God to love one another; such have experienced the highest delight in the exercise of so noble a principle; it administers a joy, which the envious or revengeful intermeddle not with. This affection partakes of the nature of incorrupt sincerity; it is love unfeigned; it does not
merely

merely consist in soft words, and in a fair address; but abounds in the fruits of all charity and goodness. It will not content itself with sympathetic language, where it is capable of active and important services. It will not deem it sufficient to say to the hungry, "be ye full," or to the naked, "be ye clothed;" but to the utmost of its power, it will administer to their respective necessities. Brotherly love, in proportion to its prevalence in the Christian church, will generously exert itself for the relief and welfare of its several members; it will do good to all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith. It will teach us to be tender of each others characters; to cast a veil of candour and oblivion over each others imperfections and infirmities; it will teach us to bear and forbear; to be kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another.

Christians

SERM.

X.

Christians are obliged mutually to exercise this affection from principles and motives peculiar to themselves. The relation in which they stand to each other is very intimate and sacred. They are the adopted children of the family of God; they are his offspring in a spiritual and very peculiar sense; they stand in the same endeared and honourable relation to one common Saviour; they are the members of that mystical body of which he is the head; they all bear the same image, have drank into the same spirit, and are called with the same high and holy vocation. They stand related to the same heavenly country; they are denizens of the same city, and are joint heirs of the same inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. By one spirit they are all baptized into one body; here then there must be no schism, but the members must have the same care one of another.

When

When we consider the very near and SERM.
X.
sacred relation which subsists between the members of the Christian church, it will appear, they are obliged to brotherly love in a very high and eminent degree. The flame of this generous and sacred affection ought not to be damped by any of those illiberal names and distinctions which are the creatures of bigotry and superstition. Brotherly love ought to continue, notwithstanding the diversity of our private judgments, and the external modes of our religious worship.

If we can only think well of those who are within the pale of our own communion, we deserve no higher commendation than what is given to those, who only love such as love them. When we feel ourselves in danger of being contracted by some narrow and superstitious notions; let us correct this erroneous bias, by adverting to the following consideration: "He that feareth God, and worketh righteousness,

SERM.

X.

ness, is accepted of him." Let our Christian love embrace all those who bear the moral image of our Saviour; and let us put far from us that ungenerous surmise, which confines salvation within the limits of any particular denomination of Christians. Could we admit any thing so unfriendly to the salvation of those who differ from us in certain sentiments and practices, it might make us gloomy, perhaps morose; and would entirely deprive us of those sensations of pleasure, of which we are conscious, while we contemplate the redeemed of the Lord, as consisting of all nations and kindreds of the earth; of various forms and persuasions in religion; of some from the north, of others from the south, of sons from afar, and of daughters from the ends of the earth. Let us cherish that brotherly love, which embraces all those who shall hereafter constitute the assembly of the church of the first born above; an assembly which will consist not merely of

of one particular denomination of religious professors; not merely of those who have been used to pay their devotions on *this mountain*, or at *that temple*, but of all through every age, who have worshipped the Father in spirit and in truth.

SERM.
X.

Let brotherly love continue, since we profess ourselves the disciples of Christ, and others will reasonably expect it from us. If we call ourselves Christians, they will naturally look for a spirit of charity to prevail among us. They have heard us speak highly of the character of our Leader, as one that exemplified the most universal benevolence; they have perceived us to advert with a generous fervour to those sacred lessons which powerfully enforce mutual love. It will then be expected, that we imitate his pattern whose name we bear, that we strictly adhere to those maxims which are enforced by his authority and example. If they perceive

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SERM.
X.

any very evident defect in charity and kindness among professing Christians, they will lose all veneration for that divine system ; and will hastily conclude, that it is the machination of priestcraft, destitute of that evidence which is necessary to convince an impartial inquirer after truth. If those who call themselves Christians are exceeded by others in the graces of meekness, peaceableness, and charity, they will no longer allow the pre-eminence to Christianity, as a system the most favourable to brotherly love and kindness : our glorying in this respect will be made void : we must give up the peculiar excellency of the gospel, and our enemies will exult in so disgraceful a concession. We may defend Christianity by certain arguments, as a very kind and benevolent religion, but others will never think highly of it in this view, unless we illustrate the truth of such arguments, by the mildness and charity of our lives and characters.

If

If others hear of the temper of Jesus, and if they give themselves time to examine his religion, they will immediately conclude, that his disciples and followers love one another, and are at peace among themselves. Let us not then disappoint their expectations by the indulgence of angry or revengeful passions; let us evidence by the general kindness of our deportment, that we have been with Jesus; that we have not only named his name, but that we have also imbibed his spirit, and uniformly observe the commandment which he has left us—"to love one another."

SERM.
X.

As the cultivation of this spirit will tend much to the honour of our holy religion, so it will likewise be productive of much pleasure to ourselves, and the most beneficial effects to others. In the exercise of pure and generous passions, there is the noblest sensation of delight and joy. When the soul is enlarged with brotherly love, its capa-

SERM.

X.

city for happiness is also increased; it experiences the bliss of an entire freedom from every envious and malignant principle: it wishes well to all; and enjoys the luxurious pleasure of doing good, to the utmost extent of its capacity and power. If such a one is prospered by the providence of God, he knows how much more blessed it is to give than to receive; he has the pleasure of devising liberal things, and of performing offices the most important and benevolent; of feeding the hungry, of cloathing the naked, of protecting and relieving the widow and fatherless; and of causing the blessing of those who were ready to perish to come upon him. Where brotherly love exerts itself with a generous ardour, it is a universal blessing: it promotes the peace of Christian societies, and effectually extirpates those roots of bitterness, which have so often sprung up among them. "It suffereth long, and is kind; it envieth not; it vaunteth not itself; it is not puffed

puffed up ; it doth not behave itself un-
seemly," but is modest and gentle in the
whole of its deportment ; " it is not
easily provoked ; thinketh no evil, bear-
eth all things." Finally, that society
in which brotherly love continues and
prevails, bears the nearest resemblance
to the harmony and happiness of the
heavenly world. All the members of
that society which is above, love one
another out of a pure heart fervently ;
the various mansions at God's right
hand, are so many seats of fraternal af-
fection. You will there find nothing
of that distance and reserve, of that un-
kindness and ill-will, of that jealousy
and frowardness, which have been too
much indulged by some of the profes-
sors of Christianity on earth. These
will then be among the former things
that are passed away. Every temper
is there kind and friendly ; every cha-
racter is there perfect. This brotherly
affection shall continue its kind and ge-
nerous offices throughout eternity ; whe-
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SERM.

X.

SERM. ther there be tongues, they shall cease;
X. whether there be knowledge, it shall
vanish away ; but charity never faileth.

Let brotherly love continue. It will always abide among the inhabitants of heaven. May its influence on this earth be more universal and powerful ! Under its mild and gracious reign, may we each be training up to join the assembly of the church of the first-born above ! Amen.

SERMON

SERMON XI.

THE ALMOST CHRISTIAN.

ACTS xxvi. 28.

*Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou
persuadest me to be a Christian.*

THIS Agrippa is the son of Herod, SERM.
XI.
who persecuted the apostles James
and Peter ; the one he put to death, and
the other he committed to prison.
When his father died, he is said, by
historians, to have been about seventeen
years of age, and on the death of his
uncle he was preferred to royal dignity
by the emperor of Rome.

He

SERM.

XI.

He was now on a visit to Festus, at Cesarea, where Paul was at this time a prisoner. By Agrippa's particular desire, Paul is brought forth to make his defence before him; in doing which, his address is so animated, and his reasoning so strong, that the king finds it difficult to resist conviction, and cries out, in the language of the text—"Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."

Doubtless many objections to his becoming a convert to the Christian faith obtruded themselves. Christianity in that day was not accommodated to the pride and ambition of the princes of this world, and therefore they would look down upon it with neglect and contempt.

The defenders of the faith were not then covered with the robes of royalty, nor were they seated upon the thrones of secular empire. We must look for them

them in the humbler spheres of life; SERM.
God having made choice of the weak XI.
things of this world, to confound the
mighty. The church at that time was
equally destitute of wealth and power,
and had nothing to flatter the pride
and ambition of worldly minded men.

Agrippa was struck with the account
which Paul had given of his conversion
to Christianity, and was *almost* persuad-
ed to become a convert to that faith,
for the sake of which he was now a
prisoner. But the evidence of truth
must be resisted; conviction must be
stified; a crown is in question, and
Agrippa must not suffer himself to be
altogether persuaded to become a Chri-
stian. Had he acted otherwise, his
courtiers would have been offended; a
very unfavourable report might have
been made of him at Rome. Bernice
would have used her female eloquence
to dissuade him from a step so impolitic
and visionary. His former connections

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SERM.

XI.

in polite life would have ridiculed and despised him ; and either have entirely avoided his company, or made him on every occasion, the subject of jest and laughter. They might have proceeded to greater extremities. Is he altogether persuaded to become a Christian? He must be deposed : he is no longer fit to reign as king ; and under some false iniquitous pretence he must be persecuted on account of his attachment to this new religion.

If then Agrippa reasons with flesh and blood ; if he consults his present ease and emolument ; he must be no Christian, and must content himself with only being *almost* persuaded to become one.

Happy indeed would it have been for Agrippa, had he proceeded further in this business—had he encouraged the present conviction of his mind, and become a sincere convert to the religion of Christ.

Are

Are you not ready to blame Agrippa for being only *almost* persuaded to become a Christian? Doubtless Agrippa was highly culpable. But those persons ought not to censure Agrippa, who in respect to the practical influence of Christianity are precisely in the same situation. They are only *almost* persuaded to become Christians; fluctuating in their principles; unstable in their conduct; and partial in their obedience to the laws of Christ. They profess themselves Christians—Agrippa would have done the same in their circumstances. A profession of Christianity in certain situations, is no proof of a person's being fully persuaded to become a Christian. Such a profession may be the effect of certain accidental and foreign causes; such as have no respect to true religion, which is a matter of conscientious conviction.

SERM.
XI.

To be altogether a Christian, is to have the heart in a state of subjection

SERM.
XI.

to the principles of the gospel, and to manifest their power in a uniform consistent life and walk.

Considering Christianity in this point of view, how many are there who are only *almost* Christians? The influence of the faith which they profess is superficial and partial; their mind is not renewed by its sanctifying power, and the operations of their faith are irregular and feeble. Such persons are religious on particular occasions, or on certain solemn days: their passions are moved: they receive the word with joy: they do many things: but these impressions are transient and ineffectual; and neither impart strength to the soul in its conflict with temptation, nor are of any use in forming the character to any high attainments in wisdom and holiness. These delusive impressions, so flattering and soothing to the hearts of many, are even as the morning cloud and early dew, and must not therefore be taken
into

into our account, in forming an estimate
of a character altogether Christian.

SERM.

XI.

There is another description of persons, who are only *almost* persuaded in respect to the grand concern of religion. They are impressed with the evidences of revealed religion, and it is with difficulty that they resist conviction. Nevertheless they say, "the gospel contains many hard sayings"—sayings which they cannot at present receive, at least in the full extent of their import. Its precepts are strict; its requirements are great. A partial surrender of themselves to its authority, they could easily comply with: but to be altogether a Christian, and to be habitually governed by a practical regard to all the precepts of the gospel; of this they can form no idea. Situated as they are in the midst of pleasing and interesting connections — connections which at present are flattering to them, and which promise yet more in prospect

SERM.

XI.

pect—connections which require the nicest management, and which will not admit of a very scrupulous regard to conscience and religion.

Thus situated, to become altogether a Christian seems quite impracticable. What, is it expected that I should cut off a right hand, or pluck out a right eye, that I should mortify passions, which I have been accustomed to indulge, and in which I and my associates have thought there was no great harm? Then there must be a new creation, and a very extraordinary revolution take place in my views and sentiments. Acknowledged—the very revolution which the faith of the gospel is calculated to effect; which it has effected in former ages; which it continues to effect in all those who receive it not as the word of man, but as it is in truth the word of God. There is nothing harsh or unreasonable in the requirements of Christianity, though some have

have ventured to misrepresent and calumniate the gospel. It requires you to give up no interest that is founded in justice; to dissolve no connection that has virtue for its basis, and to relinquish no prospects that are honourable in themselves, and will finally prove advantageous to you.

SERM.
XI.

It requires you to believe in Jesus as the Christ; and sufficient evidence accompanies the truth both of his pretensions and doctrine. Witness the accomplishment of prophecies, the working of miracles, and his resurrection from the grave.

It requires you to make conscience of imitating his example, and in proportion to your conformity to it, will be your progress in every amiable grace and useful virtue.

While you look for the mercy of God through him unto eternal life, it requires

SERM. XI. quires you to do the things that he has commanded you. None of his commandments are grievous. There are none but such as unbiassed reason must approve, and which the lives and examples of the excellent of the earth have exemplified.

Since this is the case, since the demands of the gospel are so reasonable, and the evidence of its truth so satisfactory, instead of being only *almost* persuaded to become Christians, it is a matter of the last consequence, that the business be brought to a speedy issue, and that you become *altogether* such.

Religion is an affair of too great moment, to justify any long suspense about it. Your present peace, and future happiness depend on your being fully persuaded on this subject.

I. In the first place, your present peace is concerned.

A

A state of suspense is always uncomfortable, and this in proportion to the importance of the object of our immediate attention. Of all subjects, religion is the most important, and it has been viewed in this light by persons of different descriptions and characters through all ages.

SERM.
XI.

Those who have filled the highest stations, have not been elevated above the power of conscience: some rays of light have occasionally darted in upon the soul, and the rulers of this world have been constrained to look up to religion, and forward to futurity, with veneration and awe.

King Agrippa doubtless experienced a great conflict in his breast, on account of his being only *almost* persuaded. His thoughts must have troubled him, and his peace for a time must have been greatly disturbed. Agrippa did not, like Festus, conceive of Paul as a mad
F f enthusiast.

SERM. XI. enthusiast. He was himself a person of too much intelligence, and too well versed in the records of antient prophecy, to view him in a light so absurd and ridiculous.

The resisting his convictions, and evading the energy of divine truth, must have been an occasion of great disquietude to the soul of Agrippa. Had he acted otherwise, he might have experienced settled peace and rest: other troubles would have been of the external kind; his soul he would have possessed in calmness and fortitude.

As it was with Agrippa, so is it with many of the present day. They have not resolution to submit themselves to the authority of truth and conscience. Had they more firmness of mind, their peace and happiness would not be interrupted as it now is. They are no atheists; nor think it any accomplishment to ridicule the religion of their ancestors.

tors. They look up to their pious parents with reverence, and to the characters of all good people with respect and veneration. SERM.
XI.

At times they are almost persuaded to become such; and the convictions of their minds are so strong, that perhaps they form some pious resolutions. But as soon as they mix with the world again, these sentiments are in a manner obliterated; their serious thoughts are dissipated and vanish. The charms of vanity, and the temptations of pleasure now operate with a resistless energy, and they have lost all sense of the obligations of religion. And what is the effect of this instability and weakness? They are again led captive into a state of the most inglorious subjection; and till the next interval of serious reflection, they remain in a state of security. Then truth and conscience are permitted again to exert their authority; a fearful storm is raised in the breast; and

SERM. XI. remorse and shame are the portion of this unstable and irresolute character. He was *almost* persuaded, but not quite determined. He was halting between two opinions, and while he thus fluctuated, the world, and its temptations, easily gained the conquest.

And must not this character be a stranger to peace? Under the gospel revelation, it admits light sufficient to make it miserable, but it walks not according to that light, and therefore it is a stranger to the consolations of faith and a good conscience.

Many amiable qualities may be blended with this character; nor ought we to be forward in our censures. Persons of this character often partake of sensibility, and are inspired with a degree of veneration for religion.

They suffer much from their own private reflections, and severely condemn themselves.

They

They cannot walk in forbidden paths with the firmness and intrepidity of a profane scoffer. They are seasoned with better principles, and their convictions are the constant troublers of their peace.

SERM.
XI.

Had they been not only *almost*, but *altogether* persuaded to be truly religious, a divine serenity would have overspread the soul; and unutterable joys would have flowed in upon the heart.

Such a character would possess a peace independant of the accidents of time, and the convulsions of a world, a peace which passeth all understanding.

II. Secondly; not only is your present peace concerned, but also your future happiness. Brethren, the time is short—life is uncertain—death may arrest you—and at that awful crisis, it will afford you but little satisfaction to reflect, that you have been almost persuaded

SERM.
XI.

suaded to become truly religious. The question long since, you will then perceive, ought to have been fully determined. In that case your dying pillow might have been rendered easy to you. You might have been freed from dark suspicions and terrifying fears. In that case, you might have taken your leave of the present world, amidst the divine consolations and triumphant hopes of the glorious gospel.

However persons may content themselves to live, it is very certain, that they would not chuse to die with only being *almost* persuaded to become Christians. There is not a single promise in the gospel, which secures heaven to such a character.

Those persons who are religious only so far as their present interests and favourite indulgencies permit, must never expect to enter into the kingdom of heaven. In the opinion of others, and
also

also in their own estimation, they might not be far from it. But this will afford them no consolation, when they see others entering in, and themselves for ever excluded. The nearer their approach, the greater will be the confusion and horror of disappointment.

SERM.
XI.

From this time may we never satisfy ourselves with only being *almost* persuaded, where religion is concerned. If religious at all, it is absolutely necessary that we be altogether so.

Make no reserve for any of the unjust claims of the world, nor for the gratification of irregular and degenerate passions. It is impossible to serve God and mammon. If we serve the Lord at all, it must be with a perfect heart, and with a conscientious respect to all his commandments. If we would acquit ourselves as the followers, or approve ourselves as the friends of Jesus
Christ

SERM.

XI.

Christ, we must be ready to make every sacrifice which he demands at our hands.

You doubtless remember the young man in the gospel, whose amiable qualities caused Jesus to look upon him with peculiar complacency. He was almost persuaded to become one of his followers, but not altogether: he had great possessions: he could not part with them at the command of Christ; and he went away sorrowful.

To conclude. Let us never satisfy ourselves as to the safety of our spiritual state, while we make a deliberate reserve for some interest or gratification, inconsistent with the demands of the gospel of Christ. Are you altogether persuaded to become Christians? Then you may depart in peace. Your condition is happy beyond expression. You may enjoy life; nor need you be afraid

afraid of death. An happy and glorious immortality awaits you beyond the grave, according to the promise of God's infinite mercy in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

SERM.
XI.

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SERMON

SERMON XII.

ON THE CAUSES OF RELIGIOUS DEJECTION.

PSALM CXXXVII. 4.

*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a
strange land?*

SERM.
XII.

THIS Psalm presents us with a very natural and pathetic description of the melancholy state of God's peculiar people, when captives in Babylon. The author of it is unknown, as also the time of its composition. Some have supposed it was written by David under a spirit of prophecy: others have placed it among the Lamentations of Jeremiah.

Some

Some have thought it was composed towards the close of the captivity, and others have referred it to some period after its completion. It is not easy to ascertain the truth of these particulars, neither is it an object of any moment. The Psalm itself is a very simple and striking piece of composition. It gives us such a natural and affecting description of the Jewish captives, that every mind, capable of sensibility, must immediately feel for them in their calamitous condition. The strain of the composition is so artless and moving, that it is almost impossible to read this Psalm without feeling the influence of those tender and sympathetic passions, which are so strongly described. We see, as it were, the unhappy sufferers seated beside some branch of the great river of Babylon; placed there by their enemies for the purposes of labour; or by choice, as a situation that invited their grief, and soothed their melancholy. Their harps, those instruments of music which

SERM.
XII.

SERM.
XII.

were formerly expressive of their joy, are now hung upon the willows; their feasting is turned into mourning, and their songs into lamentation.

They are now seated by the river side, in the land of a stranger; in which situation they turn their thoughts towards Zion; the magnificence of their temple; the splendour of their worship; their holy convocations, and solemn sacrifices which are passed away. The priests and levites are no longer engaged in the peculiar duties of their sacred function; but are seated in silent and abject grief, in a profane and idolatrous country. They are no longer encompassed with the venerable forms of Jehovah's worship, but with the senseless rites of an impious superstition. Judah and Israel no more dwell safely every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, as in the days of Solomon, but they now lie at the mercy of their enemies,

mies, and are exposed to the ignominy of an oppressive bondage.

SERM.]
XII.]

In this humiliating and afflictive condition, no wonder that they wept, when they remembered Zion. They now more than ever revere and love the city of their God: in their affliction they seek him early, and being deprived of their former felicities and dignities, they begin to think very highly of them. They prefer Jerusalem above their chief joy; and will no more leave the worship of Jehovah, for that of their profane and idolatrous neighbours. When they called to remembrance the sacred honours, and civil privileges of which they are bereaved, no wonder they should be sensible of a very high degree of regret and sorrow. "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea we wept, when we remembered Zion;" when we called to remembrance that magnificence, beauty, order, and solemnity,

SERM.
XII.

nity, which are now buried in the most disgraceful ruins.

We are farther to conceive of the Jewish captives, as meeting with very harsh and unkind treatment from the cruelty of their enemies. Not only to oppress, but likewise to insult the afflicted, are some of the tender mercies of the wicked. The rage of their malevolence will commonly express itself by scoffing at the peculiarities of some religious professions. As they themselves are destitute of a sense of piety, they are so barbarous and illiberal, as to ridicule the sacred and useful forms of faith and devotion.

The Jewish captives were now pointed at with an air of the most ungenerous contempt, on account of the peculiar rites of their worship. As there were certain political compositions, the singing of which constituted a considerable part of their devotion, their enemies
seeing

seeing them dejected and melancholy, desired that they would give them one of the songs of Zion; one of those sacred pieces of composition which they had been accustomed to sing upon that holy hill; which request, we may suppose to have been made in a manner very disrespectful and abusive. The sorrowful captives reply—"How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" How shall we, who are melancholy and dejected, far from Zion, in the land of a stranger, indulge any appearances of joy and cheerfulness? Our hearts are now overcharged with grief; this we are frequently venting in tears, we even weep when we remember Zion; in these circumstances of dejection and melancholy, "how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?"

SERM.
XII.

However proper such a reply might be on the part of the Jewish captives; it is no branch of true religion to cultivate a melancholy and desponding spirit.

SERM.
XII.

spirit. Men of profane and licentious characters have been very forward to object to the devotion of the Christian character, on account of the apparent gloom and dejection of some religious professors. If any persons of real religion and piety refuse those expressions of joy and chearfulness, which might be reasonably expected from them, I mean in what remains, not so much to justify their conduct, as to offer a modest apology on their behalf. Now there are certain circumstances which diffuse a gloom through the minds of some religious professors, which have no necessary connection with their faith and piety; and others, which originate in the imperfection of their own tempers and characters, and in the disorder and wickedness of the world around them.

It may be proper to premise on this subject, that the profane world is an incompetent judge of the pleasure and happiness of the truly pious. Because
their

their chearfulness does not partake of SERM.
XII.
the folly and extravagance of sinful mirth, they immediately conclude, that they are gloomy and dejected; that they know not how to enjoy life, because they live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world. The pleasures of faith, penitence, and piety, are sacred and sublime joys, which those strangers intermeddle not with.

We may farther premise, that there are certain circumstances in which the pious themselves may be called to the exercise of very serious and solemn thoughtfulness. When the judgments of God are gone forth in the earth, under the apprehension or suffering of any public calamity; or when visited with a succession of personal or domestic affliction, it behoves them in these seasons seriously to consider, and to indulge a gravity of thought and reflection correspondent to the more awful dispensations of Providence. When persons

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SERM.
XII.

in these circumstances, are with reverence learning the divine will in the school of adversity and affliction, I need not say how illiberal it would be to charge the piety of such with austerity and gloom.

As to that dejection which is sometimes apparent among religious professors, we may remark,

I. It is frequently occasioned by their own erroneous conceptions of religion. It is doubtless a matter of the last importance, that we form just and rational ideas of faith and piety ; since our religious system will have a powerful influence on our temper and deportment. The human mind is prone to extremes in the conceptions which it forms of the nature of God, and that revelation which he has made to our world. Some have entertained presumptuous ideas of the divine mercy ; and others have formed such erroneous conceptions of his

his justice and holiness, as is scarcely
consistent with his goodness. To ad-
just the claims of these different perfec-
tions, is the province of the sacred
scriptures in general, and of the medi-
atorial character of our Saviour in par-
ticular. Whatever harsh or gloomy
ideas any may form of the Christian
dispensation, this is certain, that mer-
cy and truth are met together, righte-
ousness and peace have kissed each
other, under an administration so wise
and gracious. Whosoever will, may
now come and take of the water of life
freely; "him that cometh unto me,"
says our Saviour, "I will in no wise cast
out."

SERM.
XII.

We may adopt gloomy and despond-
ing sentiments, by reason of an illi-
beral and erroneous education. The
rigours of superstition may bind upon
us very heavy burdens; and such un-
generous impositions may render our
tempers morose and melancholy; but

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SERM.
XII.

these are no branches of true piety ; they are foreign to the nature of unde-
filed religion, whose service is perfect
freedom, and in keeping whose com-
mands there is great reward.

II. The professors of religion are
sometimes dejected, by reason of that
timidity which we term constitutional.
There are many who fear, where no
fear is ; whose natural tempers seem to
incline them to distrust and despon-
dency. This displays itself both in re-
spect to natural and spiritual objects.
They accustom themselves to look on
the gloomy side ; they sooth their me-
lancholy, and even refuse to be comfort-
ed. They do not serve the Lord with
that cheerfulness, which is both their
duty and privilege. If we require of
them religious joy, they are ready to
reply, in the language of the text,
“ How shall we sing the Lord’s song in
a strange land ? ” where we are encom-
passed with so many infirmities, where
we

we are wrestling with so many misgiving doubts and fears? How shall we sing the Lord's song, who are conscious of such darkness of mind, and langour of affection, that we frequently know not how to pray, or what to pray for as we ought—who know not whether we have any right to the joy of God's salvation? The mind is not always alike cheerfully disposed, even among those who have the greatest cause for contentment and thankfulness. The diffidence and timidity of temper natural to some, hinder them from enjoying that peace and pleasure, which others have experienced, while walking in the paths of wisdom and piety. This unutterable joy is sometimes damped, not merely by a natural timidity of temper, but by a criminal negligence and inconstancy in their walk with God; they are not sufficiently uniform and humble; they are too vain and precipitate, and thus deprive themselves of the joy of God's salvation.

SERM.
XII.

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SERM.
XII.

III. The professors of religion are sometimes cast down by reason of a series of very gloomy and painful afflictions. Pious Christians may sometimes be in heaviness through manifold trials. They have been visited, it may be, with a sad variety of distress and woe: the scene of prosperity may now be shifted for that of adversity, and the mountain that once stood strong, now totter. One affliction follows another in quick succession, and the recollection of former prosperity, does but embitter their present distress. Piety and religion do not extirpate human sensibility; to suppose this would be injurious and reproachful to that sacred cause. The genuine influence of these sublime principles gives an edge to the tender and sympathetic passions, so that the most virtuous and religious characters not only suffer from their own affliction, but also take a share in the distresses of others. They weep with those that weep, and mourn with those that lament. There is a generous
and

and noble sense, in which they bear the
burdens of others, and so fulfil the law
of their Saviour, and the law of love.
Persons of this character may be more
sensibly affected with the troubles and
afflictions of human life, than those who
are thoughtless, obdurate, and impious;
who are equally estranged from the re-
finement of philosophy, and from the
sanctification of religion. These for a
season may be cast down, through the
manifold trials of the present state; and
while overwhelmed with an excess of
grief, may even refuse to be comforted.
Such may be ready to cry out,—How
shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange
land? a land of darkness, of sorrow, and
of death—a wilderness, in which our
path is beset with thorns—a state in
which we are exposed to innumerable
dangers, and where we are continually
suffering from a variety of woe. Pro-
vidence, in its mysterious and awful
dispensations, is habituating us to that
sobriety of carriage, that solemnity of
thought,

SERM.
XII.

SERM.
XII.

thought, which will not admit of those easy expressions of joy and cheerfulness with which others abound.

Now this dejection, when it is not accompanied with ingratitude and murmuring, rather calls for pity than for censure; while at the same time our concern for the honour of religion obliges us to remind such gloomy professors, that it is the duty of a Christian in every thing to give thanks, and never to cherish that habitual melancholy which incapacitates for so reasonable and delightful a service.

IV. The fourth and last reason which I shall assign for the dejection and gloom of some religious professors; is “the profane and immoral state of the world around them.”

They are vexed with the loose and irregular conversation of wicked men,
“Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,”
says

says the pious Psalmist, "because they keep not thy law." They see iniquity abounding, and the love of many waxing cold. A spirit of profaneness, pride, and luxury overspreads the world: a spirit of indifference, or uncharitable zeal, (two extremes very common in religion) has preyed upon the vitals of true devotion within the boundaries of the church. Those religious societies that were prosperous and flourishing, are now in a manner totally deserted: the posts of wisdom's doors are forsaken, and there are but few who are fervent in spirit serving the Lord. Such melancholy changes in the religious world, will doubtless afflict those aged Christians who have lived to observe them. Such must mourn for the departing glory, and weep when they remember Zion.

SERM.
XII.

These are some of the causes of that gloom and dejection, which are frequently to be found among religious
I i professors;

SERM.
XII.

professors; and lest any should be prejudiced against a life of devotion, it may be necessary again to observe, that they originate in those calamities which are common to men, or in the imperfection of the tempers and characters of professors, and are by no means to be imputed to the genuine influence of undefiled religion.

“Wisdom’s ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace;” this is the language of our holy religion. “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.” This was the practice of the first professors of the gospel: when exposed to the severest sufferings, they went on their way rejoicing. May this joy eminently abound among us, who live in these latter days. May we frequently meditate on the promises of God, and make them our song in this house of our pilgrimage.

By

By the sublime nature of our Christian profession, we are strangers and pilgrims upon the earth ; we are at present in a state of imperfection, and many things may arise to afflict and distress us.

SERM.
XII.

We may now go forth weeping, but under the influence of our divine faith and hope, we may look forward to that happy and glorious state, where our spiritual harps will never be suspended on the willows, but where they will be constantly employed through eternity, in celebrating the praises of him that sitteth upon the throne, and of the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE CHARACTER AND BLESSEDNESS OF
SAINTS IN HEAVEN.

REVELATION vii. 13.

*And one of the elders answered, saying
unto me, What are these which are ar-
rayed in white robes, and whence came
they?*

SERM.
XIII.

IT is the peculiar excellency of the
gospel of Jesus, that it enlarges our
conceptions of God's moral govern-
ment, and introduces us to the know-
ledge of those connections and relations
which are invisible and heavenly. But
notwithstanding the ample and glorious
discoveries of divine revelation, it may
with justice be affirmed concerning the
Christian, "that it doth not yet appear
what

what he shall be." He at present knows SERM.
XIII.
but in part, and only sees through a
glass darkly. When we consider the
nature of that glory which is to be
hereafter revealed, and the frailty of
his present capacities and conceptions,
it is no wonder that it should not have
entered into his heart fully to compre-
hend so divine a subject. He is assured
of a happy and everlasting existence be-
yond the grave, but cannot at present
solve all those questions which relate to
the particulars of such an existence.
Where is the Christian so fully instructed
in this heavenly science, as to be able
to describe the happiness of Paradise,
the glory of the resurrection, and the
complete redemption of the sons of God.
To attempt to pry into those particu-
lars which are not revealed in the sa-
cred writings, may be deemed a species
of vain presumption; nevertheless it is
no small relief to the pious Christian,
amidst the painful uncertainty and
gloomy vicissitudes of the present state

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SERM.
XIII.

to hold frequent converse with the heavenly world. Such a light is thrown upon life and immortality by the gospel of Christ, as enables him to fix his meditations upon it with a high degree of satisfaction and joy. He is not seated in those regions of darkness, where its inhabitants are encompassed with ignorance or anxiety. His faith holds communion with invisible realities; his hope enters within the vail. By an extraordinary interposition of divine mercy, he is come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God; he holds converse with angelic natures, with the spirits of the just made perfect, with God the judge of all, and with Jesus the mediator of the new covenant.

The scene of that vision which here appeared to John, seems to have been laid in heaven: a representation is given of the throne of God; of angels and saints surrounding this throne. We have likewise a description of the fervour

your, humility, and reverence of their devotion: they fell prostrate on their faces, and worshipped God, ascribing salvation to him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. One of the elders in this vision, beholding a great multitude, which no man could number, who were not natives of the heavenly world, but appeared in it with some peculiar marks of honour and majesty, inquires of Saint John, saying—
“What are these which are arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?”

SERM.
XIII.

In discoursing upon the words, it may be proper to consider the *rank, character,* and *state* of the persons here referred to,

I. As to the rank that they hold in the creation of God, they were originally formed a little lower than the angels. The powers of their nature were less capacious; their understandings less penetrating, and their knowledge contracted

256 *Character and Blessedness of Saints in Heaven.*

SERM.
XIII.

tracted within narrower boundaries, and this part of their frame was liable to dissolution. It was originally taken from the dust of the earth, and was the seat of those senses which rendered them capable of animal enjoyment. But sensual gratifications were not the grand end of their destiny; they were endued with those intellectual and moral powers which raised them above the mere animal creation. Their chief happiness was to consist in the favour, worship, and imitation of God; the understanding and affections were to employ and delight themselves in their eternally glorious Creator. Their nature, in its original state of innocence bore the most lively impress of the divine image; it was the noblest work of God in this part of his creation; and notwithstanding its beauty has been defaced by sin, there still remain some striking linaments of intellectual majesty and glory. This is evident in those instances where
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its renovation is but partly effected : in SERM.
XIII.
such cases human nature is beginning to assert its former liberty, and is tending towards that moral perfection in which consists its highest glory and happiness. This was the case with those persons who are referred to in the text ; they were renewed in the spirit of their mind, and conformed to the moral image of their Saviour.

As to the place of their abode, they were inhabitants of this lower world ; they were subjected to those infirmities which were the common lot of human nature, and were born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. They were cloathed with bodies of humiliation, liable to the same frailties and afflictions, experiencing similar revolutions and vicissitudes to those which are felt by us at present. They might sometimes suffer from the gloom of melancholy, and from the prevalence of painful and suspicious fears : and the frame of their

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mind

SERM.
XIII.

mind might not be invariably cheerful and joyous any more than ours. They held the same rank in the creation of God, and were therefore liable to those frailties and sufferings which were incident to it. They were exposed to like occasions of disquietude, and had to encounter with similar troubles and afflictions. The ravages of death were equally extensive and formidable in their day as in ours; houses of mourning were as frequent and gloomy; graves and sepulchres were as cold and dreary as those which are now appointed for the living. The persons described in this vision, came not only from a world of sorrow and death; but from a state of peculiar distress and suffering. Some of them had been exposed to the horrors of persecution, to the trial of cruel mockings, and to affliction and death in the most horrid forms.

Those Christians who are prone to fretfulness and discontent, would do well
to

to reflect on the distresses and persecutions of their pious predecessors. What are our infelicities and troubles compared with theirs? To render us quiet, humble, and submissive, let us remember, that the rank in which our Creator has placed us, is of an inferior and subordinate kind; that this is become humiliating and afflictive, by a revolt from God; that the condition in which we are now found is not that of blameless innocence. Our present state is degraded by sin; it is this which has robbed us of our felicity and glory, and exposed us to innumerable mortifications and trials.

SERM.
XIII.

Having considered the *rank* in which these persons were placed by divine Providence, we proceed,

II. Secondly, To contemplate their *character*. Here it may be observed, that they renounce the “arrogant” claims of innocence: a state of guilt

SERM.
XIII.

and apostacy from God will not admit of any such pretensions. They had been taught to cultivate very lowly conceptions of their state and character; their sins had been set in order before them, and their hearts had been deeply and sorrowfully affected, with a penitential sense of their manifold errors. They had returned to God in the renunciation of those false ways into which they had been formerly betrayed: in a word, they had been renewed in the spirit of their minds, and had been sanctified through the influence of divine truth.

Those of them who lived in the patriarchal age, were animated by that "faith which is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." These also died in faith, not having received the promises. Those who lived under the Mosaic œconomy, and the visions and ministrations of ancient prophets, accustomed themselves to the devotions of the Jewish ritual,
that

that religious dispensation which pre-
pared the way for a more spiritual wor-
ship under the Messiah. Those who
were favoured with the fuller discove-
ries of the gospel of Christ, were influ-
enced by the power of a more enlarged
faith; they saw those things which holy
men of old desired to hear and see, but
were not so far favoured. These latter,
during their abode upon earth, were
more fully instructed in the truths of
Christianity; they were informed par-
ticularly of the character and offices of
our common Redeemer, their regards
were directed to him as the light of the
world, and as the Lamb of God, who
came to make atonement for its sin.
They were taught to conceive of him
as the high priest of their sacred pro-
fession, who offered himself once for all,
and who by his own blood is entered
into the holiest. These have been fa-
voured with more enlarged conceptions
of the character of Jesus as our advo-
cate with the Father, as one that was
delivered

SERM.
XIII.

SERM.
XIII.

delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification, who lives to make intercession for us. Under the more perfect dispensation of the gospel, a light was thrown upon life and immortality. Jesus, their fore-runner, is represented to Christians, as taking possession of heaven in their names. He that was dead is alive again; he is ascended to his Father, and their Father, to his God, and their God, and is providing for them mansions of everlasting rest and joy. Under this dispensation they were more fully informed of a resurrection from the grave; of the descent of Christ, with power and great glory for this purpose; of the particulars of the final judgment, and the solemn process of that awful day. Under this more comprehensive view of divine truth, they confessed themselves pilgrims and strangers upon the earth; they looked at those things which are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God,

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The character of these persons was composed of principles the most sublime and spiritual ; in their resolute and heroic conduct they were animated with a divine faith and hope, and through the concurring influence of divine grace, continued faithful even unto death, and are now in the possession of that glorious crown, which shall never fade away.

SERM.
XIII.

This leads us,

III. Thirdly, To the consideration of their *state*, as already admitted to the honours and felicities of the heavenly world. The happiness of which they are now possessed we cannot at present fully comprehend. They are removed beyond the boundaries of our deepest speculations ; for we are in a state of great ignorance as to what passes in the invisible regions beyond the grave. In general we are assured,—“ Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.” How great

264 *Character and Blessedness of Saints in Heaven.*

SERM.
XIII.

great their blessedness is known to none in this assembly, nor to any of the inhabitants of this dark and distant world. Would we attain to perfection on this celestial subject, we must first put off this tabernacle, and join the church triumphant in heaven. Some particulars of their present existence are, nevertheless, discovered to us in this vision. They are preferred to stations of very distinguished dignity and happiness; they are arrayed in white robes, which are washed and purified in the blood of the Lamb.

This figurative representation of their celestial glory, may be intended to describe them under the notion of conquerors, such being cloathed in this form, when they made their triumphal appearance after a conquest. This is the promise made to the faithful in Christ Jesus,—“He that overcometh, shall be cloathed in white raiment, and I will confess his name before my Father,

ther, and before his angels" Royal SERM.
XIII
dignity is, by the grace of God, annex-
ed to this character: "To him that
overcometh, will I grant to sit with me
on my throne:" those who were once
contemned and persecuted, shall then
reign as kings and priests unto God for
ever. The reproach of the faithful fol-
lowers of the Lamb, shall then be wiped
off. Many of mean and obscure sta-
tions, who were scarcely noticed by the
world, and of whom it was altogether
unworthy, shall then make a very
splendid appearance in the court of the
paradise of God.

The persons presented to us in this
vision, are further described as engaged
in the most fervent and sublime devo-
tion; as bowing with the most pro-
found humility and reverence before the
throne, ascribing salvation and honour,
glory and power, to him that sitteth
thereon, and to the Lamb. We may
conceive of their hearts being enlarged

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SERM.
XIII.

with the most pious affections, in the more immediate presence of God and the Redeemer. They have now exchanged earth for heaven, and the humble worship of the church below for the sublime devotion of the temple which is above. They are now made pillars in that celestial building to go no more out. They have now taken a final farewell of the languor and frailty, sorrow and humiliation of this earthly pilgrimage. They are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God—no longer moving their tents from place to place, but have taken up their residence in that abiding city, whose builder and maker is God. Now, instead of treading the vale, they are sitting upon the mount; instead of sighs, and groans, and tears, their work is uninterrupted praise and love. Their harps are no longer hung upon the willows, but are constantly employed in his presence, “where there is fullness of joy, and at
his

his right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore." God is no longer calling them to mourning and lamentation, but to ceaseless praise and joy. His own gentle and gracious hand has wiped away all tears from their eyes. Every species of disquietude and sorrow is now removed; "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat; for the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of water."

SERM.
XIII.

Thus have we contemplated the *rank*, *character*, and *state* of the persons referred to in this vision. They were originally created a little lower than the angels; and subjected to those infirmities which were common to mankind in general. Their character was composed of the purest principles, such as penitence, faith, hope, and perseverance; and they are now entered into

SERM. the joy of their Lord, being admitted
XIII. to the felicities of the heavenly world.

. Let us pause to admire the riches of divine mercy and love, in the honour and happiness of glorified saints. In traversing the regions of celestial blessedness, who would expect to meet with any of our degenerate and guilty race? On beholding the innumerable company of the redeemed, a spectator might well inquire with surprise, —“ What are these arrayed in white robes, and whence came they?” Were these once the inhabitants of earth, the children of adversity, and the heirs of death? What an amazing alteration has taken place both in their state and character!

Those who once appeared in circumstances of the most affecting humiliation and suffering, are now invested with the majesty and glory of the sons of God, Are we called upon to give a reason for this marvellous revolution, we refer it
to

to the grace of our heavenly Father, SERM.
XIII.
through the mediation and death of his son. Our souls are affected with the transcendent excellency of this mercy, and this is the admiring language of our hearts,—“Behold what manner of love, the Father, has bestowed upon us!” This is the form of our devotional thanksgiving,—“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

We shall conclude with a few reflections;

1. How thankful should we be for those clear discoveries of the heavenly state

SERM. state which are made in the glorious
 XIII. } gospel.

Life and immortality are brought to light by this most seasonable and divine revelation. The hope of the resurrection is, by way of eminence, “the hope of the gospel.” The vale of death is now enlightened by this great and glorious expectation. The Christian religion is that ministration of life and righteousness which exceeds in glory. How reviving the language of its divine author,—“I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. I am he that liveth, and was dead—because I live, ye shall live also.”

The time would fail us to enumerate those various forms of expression, in which we are certified of the blessedness of those who die in the Lord—who, notwithstanding

notwithstanding the humiliation of the grave, are secured by the guardianship of that Jesus, who has the keys of death, and the unseen world.

SERM.
XIII.

2. What a vast contrast between the present and future condition of the pious throughout all ages!

The redeemed of the Lord are an innumerable company, who have lived at various periods, and under very different dispensations of religion. While they were pilgrims and strangers upon this earth, they were exposed to various humiliations and sorrows: some had the trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were slain with the sword. They went forth weeping, bearing precious seed, and are now come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. The days of their mourning are ended, and the salvation

SERM.
XIII.

vation of Israel is fully come. Those who wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, are now arrayed in white robes walking the streets of the new Jerusalem. Those who once retired to mountains, caves, and dens of the earth, are now filling those glorious mansions which Jesus has prepared in his Father's house. "These are they who came out of great tribulation, who have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

3. Finally. Let us be followers of those who, through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises. We are encompassed with a great cloud of witnesses, whose faith and fortitude we are commanded to follow, and the consideration of the glorious issue of their trials, should inspire our minds with firmness and patience. Their afflictions have wrought out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Having been faithful unto death, they are

are now in possession of the crown of life. SERM.
XIII.

Let us consider the end of their conversation, and tread in the footsteps of their piety and patience ; and the time is coming, when we also, through the abundant riches of the divine mercy, shall inherit the promises. Your redemption, my brethren, is now nearer than when you first believed. God is not slack concerning his promises ; notwithstanding the clamour of infidels and scoffers, “ he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry. He that overcometh, the same shall be cloathed in white raiment ; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life ; but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

SERMON XIV.

THE GREAT THINGS OF THE WORLD NOT
TO BE SOUGHT BY A RELIGIOUS CHA-
RACTER.

JEREMIAH xlv. 5.

*Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek
them not.*

SERM.
XIV.

THIS was a caution given to Baruch by the prophet Jeremiah, under whom he acted as a scribe, or secretary. He seems to have been seeking that ease and prosperity which could not reasonably be expected at so calamitous a period; and indeed which none who
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are truly religious ought to be very
anxious to secure at any period.

SERM.
XIV.

Great things are dangerous.

High pleasures (as the Psalmist expresseth it) are slippery. Seekest thou great things for thyself? As a man of religion, the pursuit is dangerous; as a professor of the Christian faith and hope, it is altogether inexcusable. If you wish that the interests of true religion may be prospered in your souls—if you are earnestly desirous of salvation and happiness through eternal ages, the great things of the world, such as honorary titles, large possessions, and accumulated wealth, are by no means favourable to your pursuit; they will but increase the difficulty of your salvation, if they do not render it altogether impossible. Not many mighty, not many noble are called.

SERM.
XIV.

As professors of the Christian faith and hope, this luxurious and ambitious pursuit is highly criminal ; for the faith of Christians directs their regards to eternal objects, and their hope enters within the vail.

“ Seekest thou great things for thyself ? ” The pursuit is *vain*, it is *dangerous*, and it is more than probable it may prove *fatal*.

These three thoughts will form the substance of our devout meditation on these words.

I. This pursuit, in the first place, is *vain*. Characteristics of its vanity may be easily produced. The objects of pursuit are *uncertain*, *unsatisfactory*, and *transient*.

They are great only in the mistaken estimation of human weakness and error ; and derive their importance from
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the warmth of our imaginations, rather than from any superior excellency in the things themselves. SERM.
XIV.

1. The acquisition of these objects is altogether uncertain even when pursued with the greatest diligence. Many rise early, sit up late, and eat the bread of carefulness, without being able to accomplish their favourite schemes and passionate wishes, respecting the elevation of their rank and fortune. Nay, the intemperance of their ardour has frequently been the means of this mortifying disappointment. In making haste to be rich, they have been taken in the snare of their own folly, and by reason of the impatience of pride and ambition, they have been sunk into the depths of disgrace and ruin. They have sought for things *too great* for them, and by this means have been deprived of those more desirable objects which Providence had placed within their reach. Had their tempers been more humble, their
pursuits

SERM. XIV. } pursuits would have been more moderate and successful.

When we seek *great things*, the undertaking becomes extremely hazardous, and we are instantly encompassed with innumerable snares and impediments.

Great things are possessed but by few, and high places are rarely occupied except by those whose connections are very extensive and powerful.

Uncertainty then is one *characteristic* of that pursuit, which has for its object the *great things* of this world.

2. *Dissatisfaction* is another. Supposing you to succeed in acquiring these things, you will not find *that* in them, which you vainly promised yourselves when at a distance. We are prone to be struck with the external pomp of grandeur and luxury, and to attach a number

number of very flattering ideas to honorary titles, a brilliant equipage, and a numerous retinue of servants and domestics. If we could attain to such dignified independence, we vainly imagine we should be completely happy. But this is a deception; for admitting every decent claim on the part of such distinguished eminence, these *great things*, considered in themselves, are far from administering that satisfaction, which spectators in general are ready to imagine. When they are possessed in connection with faith, virtue, and religion, they are then important additions to our happiness, by enlarging our opportunities of doing good. But unless this be the case, “a little that a righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked.”

SERM.
XIV.

These *great things* cannot purchase an exemption from affliction, or any sensible consolation under adversity. Many may possess them who are strangers to happiness

SERM.
XIV.

happiness; who are dissatisfied with themselves, and discontented with their lot. An intolerable pride, an insatiable covetousness, may have led them to expect yet *greater things, larger possessions, or more universal respect and homage.*

An affluent fortune and the most dignified titles cannot raise a man above those mortifications, which are the effects of unpopular pride and vanity. Haman was placed in the most elevated station, next to the throne of royalty itself: he had every thing to flatter his haughty spirit, one only excepted. All the king's servants did him reverence, and were ready to execute his orders. But Mordecai bowed not. This so sensibly mortified his pride, and exasperated his passions, that the other *great things*, of which he was possessed, availed him nothing, while he saw Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate. He cannot enjoy himself till he has resented the affront, and satiated his revenge;
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in attempting which, he met with the
desert of his pride and wickedness.

SERM.
XIV.

Of what consequence is it then, if the universe itself were ready to minister to our happiness, unless the state of our own minds be friendly and peaceful.

Satisfaction and happiness are not necessarily connected with rank and fortune : for it is the language of philosophy, religion, and experience, “ that a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of that which he possesseth.” Were it otherwise, thrones and sceptres, courts and palaces would be eligible indeed, and the rich and mighty would be the most serene and happy characters on this side heaven.

But are there none possessed of great wealth, who discover a meanness and poverty of spirit ; who are anxious and careful, even *more so*, than others who possess but little ?

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Are

SERM.
XIV.

Are there none whose rank is elevated, but whose minds are grovelling, whose characters are immoral, and whose lives are unhappy?

Such instances prove, that the *great things* of this world, which many seek with such eagerness, are in themselves considered altogether incapable of administering real and lasting satisfaction. There is not *that* in them, which they promised at a distance, or which will compensate the labour and hazard of seeking them.

3. The pursuit is *vain*; not only as these great things are *uncertain* and *unsatisfactory*, but also as they are *transient*. Were they more valuable than they really are, the shortness of their duration would be a very affecting characteristic of their vanity. These great things are but the possessions of a day, an hour, or a moment. The fashion of the world is continually fluctuating.

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“ Every man walketh in a vain shew, he disquieteth himself in vain.”

SERM.
XIV.

Let us view these things in connection with the shortness and uncertainty of life, and they must appear, to the serious mind, of no very great importance.

Let us view them in the light of Eternity, and then they not only lose their *consequence*, but as it were, their very being; they are less than nothing and vanity. Let your rank be ever so elevated, you must speedily be deposed. Death is no respecter of persons. It will hastily confound these honorary distinctions. The grave is totally ignorant of them, for the rich and the poor must there meet together on a perfect equality.

Could the great things of this world abide with us for ever, this might form an apology for that eagerness with

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which

SERM.
XIV.

which they are too generally pursued, But they are things which appear only for a little time, and then vanish away. This is the sad and mortifying issue of all the honours and parade of this life. Man goeth the way of all flesh, and the place which once knew him, shall know him no more.

If the pursuit of the great things of this world be a vain pursuit, then to seek them very eagerly can be no mark of a sound understanding.

There is an ambition which we acknowledge to be lawful—an ambition to excel in those particular departments in which divine Providence has placed us. We wish you not to be indifferent to the good opinion of others. We mean not to establish that visionary system which affects an entire insensibility to rank or fortune. But while we may lawfully attempt to better our condition, we ought not to seek the great things

things of the world, as the ultimate object of our aim and ambition. In this sense, “seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not.”

SERM.
XIV.

II. The pursuit of these things is not only *vain*, but *dangerous*. It is dangerous to our spiritual and eternal interests, as it unfits for the exercise of those graces which are peculiar to the religious character. The pursuit of these things diverts the mind from objects of infinitely greater consequence, and with which we have the most intimate and necessary concern. We cannot serve God and mammon, and there is a love of this world, totally inconsistent with a love of the Father.

The pursuit of these *great things* has a tendency, in the first place, to damp the power of vital religion in the heart; and, secondly, to excite those dispositions which are entirely inconsistent with

SERM. with the simplicity, purity, and charity
XIV. of the gospel.

1. The pursuit is dangerous, since it has a tendency to damp the power of vital religion in the heart.

This sacred principle seldom flourishes in connection with the dignities and emoluments of life.

We generally find, that external prosperity, elevation, and grandeur, have a strange tendency to harden the heart, and to render the mind insensible to futurity, and the powers of the world to come. Persons thus situated, have so many temptations to forget God, that at length they live without him in the world, and grow totally indifferent to the concerns of faith and true religion,

It is acknowledged on all hands, that much of the power of real godliness consists in the exercise of an habitual
regard

regard to invifible objects. Faith and hope are two of its moft active and vigorous graces. Thefe were exemplified with peculiar energy in the firft Chriftians, who aimed at the things which are unfeen and eternal. But in fucceeding ages, when religious profeflors found themfelves in circumftances of eafe and affluence, they were ready to forget their character as pilgrims, and to take up their portion in the prefent world, which feemed fo affiduous to gratify their wifhes. This external profperity has a tendency to attach us to the prefent fcene of exiftence, and to render our defires after heaven languid and feeble. When the world fmiles upon us, how flattering its addrefs! how infinuating its charms! how difficult in this cafe to maintain faith and hope in lively exercife! How great the danger of undervaluing the happinefs of the heavenly world, if we do not fink into an entire forgetfulnefs of that exalted and glorious ftate!

SERM.
XIV.

When

SERM.
XIV.

When every thing around us is so subservient to our ease and pleasure, we are ready to say, "Soul, take thy ease;" and instead of panting after God and heaven, to cry out, "It is good to be here."

Need I say this attachment is highly criminal? Is it not a reflection upon the most celebrated graces and virtues of our religion? and does it not sink the Christian hope even to a level with the expectations and desires of mere worldly men? Does it become us, as Christians, to wish always to live at this distance from God? to be content with the ease and prosperity of this life, as the grand destiny of our sacred calling? Shall we be content never to enter within the veil? never to see him face to face, and to behold our Redeemer for ourselves?

Since divine grace has revealed to us a more exalted scene of existence, it
does

does not become us, as Christians, to
rest satisfied with the present.

SERM.
XIV.

But the great things of this world strongly incline us to this temper, and therefore the pursuit of them is extremely dangerous, if we wish that the interests of vital religion may flourish in our hearts.

2. But farther, a pursuit of the *great things* of this world may give rise to dispositions which are inconsistent with the simplicity, purity, and charity of the gospel.

Under their influence we are apt to grow fond of external parade, and are in danger of too great conformity to the world. We are tempted to advance to the utmost boundaries of that which is lawful, and sometimes even to exceed those limits. We may be prone to indulge ourselves in fashionable excesses, and make rank and fortune an apology
O o for

SERM. for that which would be highly criminal, and severely censured in those who
XIV. are placed in inferior stations.

The *great things* of this world, were we possessed of them, might have a tendency to inspire us with too high ideas of our own importance, and in this view would be unfavourable to that humility, which is one of the most amiable graces of true religion.

We might be in danger of valuing ourselves upon those distinctions, which are accidental, and which do not infer any superior excellency of character. When thus elevated, we might be tempted to look down upon our inferiors, as intended to subserve our pleasure. Dependants and flatterers would corroborate these sentiments, and might tempt us to take liberties with the interests of others, no way consistent with the charity of the gospel, nor even with the established rules of justice.

A respectful deference is due to those who are elevated by their rank and fortune, but such an elevation cannot sanctify any of the deeds of oppression and cruelty. Naboth's vineyard was as valuable to him, as the dominions of a crowned head : and Naboth's vineyard, as private property, ought to have been as sacred as any of the prerogatives of royalty itself. Ahab envied him this pleasant spot, and took possession of it, at the expence of innocent blood ; but the elevation of his rank pleaded no apology in the eye of heaven ; for the prophet of the Lord thus reproves him : " Hast thou killed, and also taken possession ? In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine,"

SERM.
XIV.

Farther. The great things of this world are dangerous, not only as they prompt to pride and oppression, but as they furnish the means of luxurious indulgence,

SERM.
XIV. } indulgence, and leave the possessors of
them a prey to very disgraceful vices.

In a word, they are dangerous, since in the pursuit of them, we are prone to make a sacrifice of the noblest principles, and, when in possession, to abuse them to the purposes of impiety and licentiousness.

You may promise yourselves, that this shall not be the case respecting you. You intend to use the *great things* of the world for the good of others, and the glory of God. But be not too sanguine. You cannot be assured that wealth and power, honorary titles, and flattering distinctions would make no unfavourable impression upon your minds.

III. Under the last head it is my business to shew, that as the pursuit of *great things* is *vain* and *dangerous*, so in many instances it has proved *fatal*. I have before observed how unfavourable these
things

things are to the life and power of religion in the soul. They are accompanied with innumerable snares and temptations, and it has been found in fact, that not many rich, not many mighty, not many noble are called.

SERM.
XIV.

Our Saviour, who knew what was in man, has given us reason to believe, that this would be the case, and it has been confirmed by the experience of succeeding ages. Many of the most conspicuous characters in this world, have distinguished themselves by the extent of their conquests, and by sensual lusts, but not by the graces and virtues of religion. Those have been left to signalize others, who have been placed in humbler stations, who have been brought forth to view, not by the vastness of their estates or fortunes, but by the excellency of their Christian faith and piety.

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SERM.
XIV.

The great and opulent have been distinguished by their possessions, while the poor in this world have been constituted heirs of the grace of life.

The wicked, who have prospered in the world, have trampled on the laws of common morality; they have rejected with scorn, the precepts of religion, and the way of salvation by Jesus Christ. They have looked upon faith in his religion as blind credulity; and penitence as the characteristic of a mean spirit.

The institutions of religion have been treated by such, with irreverence and contempt; and the ministers of it as an order of men who take advantage of the weakness and superstition of the multitude. Where their sentiments concerning them have been more candid, they have conceived of them as persons, who, by reason of retirement, and small acquaintance with the world, are prescribing rules of faith and morality, impossible

possible to be observed by those who are placed in more elevated stations.

SERM.
XIV.

In the estimation of these lofty characters, they are blind superstitious guides, binding heavy and intolerable burdens. They are requiring a sacrifice much too great, and unless they can make some exceptions in favour of their elevated rank, they cannot receive salvation, on the terms that are common to the multitude. In a word, they must have another gospel; for that of our Saviour makes no distinction between the rich or the poor, the rustic or polite, the bond or the free.

Under the influence of these prejudices, and dazzled by the pomps and vanities of this world, many rich and mighty have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life.

On the whole it appears, that there is great propriety in the caution here
given

SERM.
XIV.

given to Baruch: "Seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not. The pursuit is *vain*—it is *dangerous*—and in many instances has proved *fatal*.

Let us improve the subject, by addressing persons of different characters and conditions in life.

I. In the first place; those who are possessed of the great things of this world. Such should remember, in proportion to the elevation of their rank and fortune, are their obligations to do good to others, and to set an example of Christian piety and holiness. They are as a city set upon an hill; their influence is extensive; their authority is great; and their conduct may have no small influence in forming the manners of the neighbourhood around them. It is in the power of such to give a sanction to religion, and to put to shame vicious excesses, by their personal sobriety, and domestic order.

II. There

II. There are others who do not possess the great things of this world, but who are anxiously seeking them. What they have heard should abate their ardour; the things which they now possess in humbler stations may be more convenient for them. If Providence unexpectedly grant you the great things of the world, receive them gratefully, use them moderately, and make them the instruments of a more enlarged charity. You may lawfully wish to better your situations, for the sake of yourselves and families, but you must not make haste to be rich. You are very incompetent judges what, on the whole, will be best for you, and of this you may be assured, that great things are not essential to happiness. The things which are convenient, are infinitely more desirable. And instead of eagerly seeking the great things of this world, let your hearts aspire after heaven, and set your affections on things above.

SERM.
XIV.

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XIV.

Finally. As to you who are not seeking the great things of the world, and who are not anxiously desirous of them, your situation is enviable indeed; you are strangers to those ambitious and sensual lusts, which war against the health and peace of the soul. You are already in possession of the grand *secret* of happiness, viz. contentment. Retire in peace to your less elevated stations; return with a blessing to your respective dwellings, some of them, it may be, humble cottages; eat your morsel with a thankful heart, and your dinner of herbs with all that quietness, which is infinitely superior to the stalled ox, with strife and contention. You are neither grand nor opulent, but you have food and raiment, and with these small possessions you are fully satisfied,

You have faith in the providence and grace of God; the Lord is your shepherd, you shall not want.

You

You have been taught of your Saviour SERM.
XIV.
not to seek great things, seeing he
fought them not : The foxes had holes,
the birds of the air had nests, but the
Son of Man had not where to lay his
head.

You well know that the disciple is
not greater than his Master, nor the
servant than his Lord.

You are content and satisfied with a
sense of his favour and friendship here,
and the lively and exalted hope of
meeting him in glory at the great
day.

Then to be acknowledged as follow-
ers of the Lamb ; then to have our
names written in the book of life ; then
to receive a crown of unfading glory ;
these will be great things indeed !

SERM.

XIV.

Let us (in dependence on assistance from on high) pursue these with the warmest ardour ; in so doing, we shall not be disappointed nor ashamed.

SERMON

SERMON XV.

THE TREASURE OF THE GOSPEL MINISTRY
LODGED IN EARTHEN VESSELS.

II. CORINTHIANS iv. 7.

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.

THE gospel of Christ is a most invaluable treasure, of which we cannot fail to be fully convinced, when we reflect on the principles of its doctrines, the sublimity of its hope, and those moral effects which it has produced, in the lives and tempers of men throughout all ages.

SERM.
XV.

But

SERM.
XV.

But it is with the *ministry* of the gospel that we have now a more particular concern; since this is doubtless immediately referred to in the text. This ministry is deposited in the hands of human frailty and impotency; and thus deposited, it gives occasion to a very glorious display of the divine power. On these two thoughts I beg leave to insist,

I. In the first place, "the treasure is lodged in earthen vessels;" in other words, "the ministry of the gospel is deposited in the hands of human frailty and impotence."

The metaphorical language in the text, is intended to describe the character and condition of the inspired apostles. These received a very extraordinary commission from heaven, to publish a new and divine religion.

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In themselves they were altogether unequal to the task: they were earthen vessels in which divine Providence was pleased to lodge the invaluable treasure.

SERM.
XV.

When the apostles describe themselves in the metaphorical language of the text, it leads us to reflect on the nature of their *external condition*.

In general they were men destitute of the advantages of a liberal education, and of that influence which stands connected with accumulated wealth and large possessions. They could not avail themselves of the sophistry of science, nor of any powers derived from a numerous train of dependants. They had no interest either with the rulers among the Jews, or the priests and philosophers among the Gentiles. They were treated by each with every mark of contempt, and were apparently in a state the most weak and defenceless. Silver
and

SERM.
XV.

and gold they had none; and, like their master, frequently had not even where to lay their heads. "Even unto this present hour," says the apostle, "we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and buffeted, and have no certain dwelling place." "We are made as the filth of the world, and as the off-scouring of all things unto this day." Thus poor and despised, defamed and persecuted, they were of course deprived of all countenance and assistance, from the wise and mighty of the present world.

Their external condition was mean, and destitute, which perhaps is suggested by the metaphor in the text. It may likewise be intended to represent them to us as exposed to the frailties and humiliations of life. From these we know they were not exempted; and some of them might be subjected to those natural infirmities, which, among the inconsiderate and prejudiced, might even

even diminish a reverence for their persons. This seems, in particular, to have been the case with *one*, concerning whom his enemies said, "his letters are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

SERM.
XV.

They were not only exposed to the more ordinary afflictions of human life, but to the peculiar sufferings of persecution and martyrdom. These *earthen vessels* might be broken to pieces by the rage and cruelty of their inveterate enemies, who were ingenious to invent new modes of dying, in which these holy men might be exposed, for the gratification of inhuman mirth and ridicule. There was a sense in which they bore in their bodies the marks of the Lord Jesus; in which they died daily, being constantly in danger from the threatening hand of a persecuting rage.

When the apostles are described as earthen vessels, it may be intended to

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suggest

SERM.
XV.

suggest to us, the imperfection of their characters. They were men of like passions with ourselves, and they were always careful to represent themselves as such. Ignorance and superstition may have attempted to pay them those honours, which they would be the first to reject with abhorrence. The church of Rome has done this in a form very unscriptural, and even blasphemous.

The pretensions of these holy men never exceeded the limits of their commission, as the ambassadors of Christ, and it was their ambition “not to lord it over the faith of others, but to be helpers together of their joy.”

So great was the excellency of the apostles character, and such was their consciousness of incorrupt integrity, that they could, with firmness, appeal to different churches respecting the unexceptionable nature of their conduct: “We have corrupted no man, we have defrauded

defrauded no man." They were illustrious examples of purity, fidelity, and universal goodness. They set before them the pattern of their Lord, and walked in the footsteps of his meekness and piety. They were ready to every good word and work, and conscientiously fulfilled the several parts of the Christian ministry. With pleasure we embrace every opportunity of contemplating the fervour of their religious zeal, the ardour of their love to God and the Redeemer, the strength and purity of their benevolence and charity to their fellow-christians, and all men: Nevertheless there were moral infirmities which occasionally discovered themselves in Peter, Paul, and others of that venerable and sacred fraternity. These were indeed filled with the spirit of God in its miraculous gifts, and sanctifying grace, but they were not removed out of the reach of those moral imperfections which are inseparable from hu-

SERM.
XV.

Q q 2 man

SERM. man nature in its present state of humili-
XV. liation and frailty.

Having noticed the imperfection of the apostles character as suggested by the metaphor in the text, when described as earthen vessels, let every too familiar idea on this subject receive a check from this consideration, that they were "chosen vessels;" vessels of honour, on whom God conferred a peculiar glory, lodging with them the treasure of the gospel in a degree of purity and perfection not imparted to others. When then we peruse their writings, let us do it with a spirit of serious devotion; for though composed by men of like passions with ourselves, they contain truths heavenly and sublime, vastly superior to the instructions of mere human reason in its most enlightened and improved state. These earthen vessels contained a treasure of divine origin; and these men, of like passions with ourselves, were in a sense peculiar to themselves,

selves, the ministers of God, and the ambassadors of Jesus Christ. SERM.
XV.

In respect to natural and external advantages, we not only find them *not* distinguished by them, but in a state defenceless and exposed. With these was intrusted the publication of a new and unpopular religion; and the reason for this is assigned in our text, which leads me to,

II. The second general head of discourse, viz. that the ministry of the gospel deposited in the hands of human frailty, and impotency gives occasion to a very affecting and glorious display of the divine power. For this purpose God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty; for this purpose the treasure is lodged in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of men. By reason of the weakness of the instruments employed in the first propagation
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SERM.
XV.

of the gospel, this must appear with more striking evidence to the minds of men, than could possibly have been the case, had this treasure been lodged with the princes and powers of the present world.

The power which accompanied the first ministration of the gospel was of a very extraordinary nature ; a power so great, that we are even at a loss for terms to convey any adequate idea of it. Let us contemplate the wonderful success and rapid progress of the glorious gospel, and this in connection with the natural frailty and insufficiency of the instruments employed in it ; we are then constrained to adore and confess that divine power which doubtless has accompanied it.

When the great author of Christianity left the world, the disciples were discouraged, and even comfortless. In the grave of their Master they were
ready

ready to inter all the powers and suc-
cesses of the gospel kingdom. But they
were speedily revived from this des-
ponding state, by his resurrection from
the grave, and his ascension into glory.
They were afterwards approved as the
ministers of God, by a rich and plente-
ous effusion of the spirit, in proof of
which we hear them speaking those
languages in which they had never been
previously instructed. See them, after
the example of their Lord, healing the
sick, causing the lame to walk, and even
raising the dead to life. Then confess
the finger of the Almighty, and the ex-
cellence of that power which is of God.

SERM.
XV.

How astonishing the success of the
apostolic ministry! thousands convert-
ed in a day—numbers added to the
church, of such as shall be saved, and
the gospel spreading itself through the
several parts of the Roman empire. Be-
hold with admiring reverence and gra-
titude, this little leaven leavening the
whole

SERM.
XV.

whole lump; this grain of mustard seed springing up, and becoming a tree so large and commodious, that the birds of the air take up their lodgings in the branches of it! Reflect on the number and strength of those powers which it has resisted and conquered—vain imaginations—inveterate prejudices—strong passions—superstitious ceremonies—idolatrous rites—disgraced and abolished: Thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, arming themselves in vain; their malicious outrage, accompanied with the powers of a civil authority, altogether ineffectual to extirpate the Christian doctrine from the earth. The more they attempted to suppress its rising, with a greater power, with an increase of glory has it reared its head. The prejudices of the Jews, and the pride of the Gentiles, have not been able to prevail against it. The traditions of the elders, the vain science of philosophers, have been reprov'd and abolished by the power and grace of the

the apostolic ministry. Oracles have been silenced; temples have been shaken, by the excellency of its manifold and mighty operations. SERM.
XV.

What a power accompanied the ministration of the gospel, in the transforming energy of its divine doctrine! How has it enlightened the darkness of the understanding! How has it changed and purified the heart!

What sensible effects have been produced by it in the moral world? How have the principles and dispositions of mankind been improved and sanctified? So striking an alteration has been effected in their moral and spiritual condition, that there has been a kind of new creation. Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.

In the first age of the gospel, a convert to Christianity became as it were a new man, and was regarded as such by his

R r neighbours

SERM.
XV.

neighbours and acquaintance, being distinguished by the strictness of his morals, the purity of his life, and the exemplary nature of his general behaviour. The power of the gospel in these moral effects, so sensibly struck the enemies of Christianity, that they were hereby constrained to glorify God, by confessing its divine worth and excellency.

There was likewise a glorious display of divine power in the patience and fortitude of the holy apostles, in whom humanity was evidently raised above itself. They had courage to confess the name of Jesus, in the presence of the persecuting powers of this world. They spoke with the greatest firmness and pertinency, and in seasons peculiarly critical, it was given them in that very hour what they should speak. Out of weakness they were made strong, and were evidently under the influence of a supernatural and divine power. That this power might appear more conspicuously,

cuously, "the treasure was lodged in earthen vessels." There was great wisdom in this appointment, since mankind in general have been very prone to confine their regards to creatures and instruments, instead of ascending in their thoughts and adorations to the uncreated source of power and goodness. On this principle the heavenly luminaries have received that homage which is alone due to the divine Creator. Persons dazzled with the astonishing effects of power, are apt to terminate their regards in the mere instruments of that power.

SERM.
XV.

We read of those in the Acts of the Apostles, who were about to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, supposing they were gods in the likeness of men. Those idolatrous honours they immediately rejected with a just abhorrence, acknowledging their own meanness and impotency. Amidst those astonishing effects of the divine power, of which

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they

SERM. they were the honoured *instruments*,
 XV. they were careful to direct the attention of spectators to the hand of God. This is the language of Peter and John, after the miraculous restoration of the cripple,—“Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this, or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power and holiness we had caused this man to walk.”

This irregular propensity of the human mind, stands corrected and re-proved by the view which is given us in the text of the apostolic ministry. These holy men were not the *authors* of those gifts and graces which rendered their office and characters so illustrious :—
 “They had nothing but what they had received.”

When we consider the frailty of their capacities, and the meanness of their external condition in the world, the works that were wrought by them appear

pear the more astonishing, and the more evident and illustrious was the divine hand working with them. SERM.
XV.

As one excellently observes on the triumph of the gospel,—“ Men without letters, without arms, without intrigues, without philosophy, without eloquence ; contemptible, persecuted men ; in one word, *earthen vessels*, triumphed over the whole world with the sound of their voice. Idols fell ; temples were demolished ; oracles struck dumb ; the reign of satan abolished ; the strongest inclinations of nature diverted from their course ; people’s ancient habits changed ; old superstitions annihilated ; the great and the small, the learned and the ignorant, kings and subjects, whole provinces presented themselves at the foot of the cross, and every thought was captivated to the obedience of Christ. It is not enough to say, ‘ this is the *finger* of God ;’ we must rather
“ exclaim,

SERM. "exclaim, ' this is the outstretched
 XV. " arm of the Almighty."

This constitution, viz. " the lodging of the treasure in earthen vessels," is an admirable display both of the wisdom and the power of God; and there is one use which we ought to make of the subject, which is this: From hence learn to regulate your conceptions of the inspired apostles, and the more ordinary ministers of the Christian religion. In respect to the former, they were men of like passions with ourselves; and in respect to the latter, they are more exactly upon an equality with their fellow-christians and brethren. They are in a sense very inferior to the apostles, " earthen vessels:" they are not distinguished by any of the powers of prophecy or miracle, and can lay claim to no superiority but what is derived from the advantages of a liberal education, and a more ample opportunity to inform themselves of the just sense

sense of the inspired writings. They ought always to address you under an humble sense of their own frailty, and should ever preserve the most remote distance from that authority which would lord it over your faith. It is their duty, with firmness, to declare those truths, which they conceive of as immediately and necessarily connected with your salvation; but at the same time they should not only give you the liberty, but even enjoin it upon you, to search the scriptures, whether these things be so.

SERM.
XV.

Ever remember, that your ministers are men of like infirmities with yourselves. On this account do not expect too much from them, but view their conduct with impartiality and candour. Be not forward to discern the mote in their eye, while you see not the beam which is in your own eye. And while you are candid to their imperfections, nevertheless on the other hand, you may reasonably

SERM.
XV.

sonably expect that those who sustain the ministerial office, should walk before their respective flocks as ensamples, in all purity, goodness, fidelity, and charity. You, it is presumed, who are protestant dissenters, will not be so insensible to your own honour or improvement, as ever to encourage either an ignorant or licentious ministry. No greater curse under heaven can befall a community, since the people in this case must perish for lack of knowledge, which is to be derived from the energy of a good example in their spiritual pastors and teachers. Those who labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, ought to be patterns of meekness and humility, faith and charity, whose pious examples it is your duty to follow, considering the end of their conversation.

May it please God from time to time, to give unto his churches, pastors according to his heart, who shall feed his people

people with knowledge and understanding; who shall be able and skilful ministers of the New Testament, rightly dividing the word of truth. These earthen vessels, in which the treasure of the gospel ministry is lodged, must speedily be broken in pieces by the hand of death—a thought this very affecting and instructive. Under its influence, ministers should be quickened to increasing fervour and diligence in the discharge of the duties of their office; and you ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that you hear, since the time is short and the Judge is at the door. Then whatever may be the changes of the present state, both ministers and people may rejoice together in the day of the Lord Jesus.

SERM.
XV.

SERMON XVI.

ON THE TRIAL OF FAITH.

I. PETER i. 7.

That the trial of your faith being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

SERM.
XVI.

THE sufferings of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, have frequently been a subject of painful contemplation to the human mind. It was this that perplexed the pious author of the seventy-third Psalm, who, in a fit of melancholy, was tempted to
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give up religion and piety as a vain thing, and to question God's righteous government of the world. This is the language of his desponding thoughts; "Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence: for all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning." But he speedily corrects himself on after-reflection; when he went into the sanctuary of God, then understood he their end: he sees the wicked suddenly destroyed, and utterly consumed; they are brought into desolation as in a moment, their triumphing is short; "as a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image." Notwithstanding their luxury and oppression on the one hand, and the poverty and affliction of the pious on the other; yet truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. The teachings of Christianity on this subject are very clear and decisive. Whom the Lord loveth he

SERM.
XVI.

SERM.
XVI.

chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth; manifold trials improve our faith, and work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

In discoursing upon the words of the text, I would observe,

I. In the first place—That the present is a state intended for the exercise of religious faith. II. That this faith is tried and improved, by the adverse scenes of human life. And, III. That this principle, thus improved, will appear with distinguished glory, at the second coming of Jesus Christ.

I. The present is a state evidently intended for the exercise of religious faith; which faith, is that operation of the mind, in the exercise of which we converse with those objects which are beyond the limits of our senses; it stands directly opposed to sight, and constitutes

a part of every virtuous and truly religious character. Such is the constitution of human nature, that we have a concern with both worlds, that which now is, and that which is to come : we have interests to regard in the present state, with which our senses are daily conversant ; these objects have a powerful tendency to affect our hearts, to inflame our passions, and to divert us from those rational and spiritual pursuits, which are essentially connected with our highest happiness. It is the office of faith to counteract the force of our senses and appetites, and to assist us in our regards to those things which are unseen and eternal. Our senses remind us of our relation to this world, our faith reminds us of our relation to another ; these relations are the necessary result of the present constitution of divine providence ; relations which are not incompatible with each other, when our regards to each other are under the proper influence of faith and religion.

SERM.
XVI.

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SERM.
XVI.

Some persons have conceived of a concern with this world, as inconsistent with a life of faith and devotion, on which principle they have retired from the duties and offices of social life ; but this is a species of that fanaticism which, under the pretence of exalted devotion, neglects the cultivation of some important branches of the Christian character. There are but few who can lawfully embrace, or virtuously improve solitude. When we recommend a life of faith, we only plead, that as reasonable beings, and professed Christians, we have higher and nobler relations than any which originate from the present world; that the objects with which we have the most interesting concern, lie beyond the sphere of our sight and senses ; that a veil at present is cast upon these objects, and even in the exercise of our religious faith, we do but see through a glass darkly, This is the principle by which we are to be governed in the present state ; the exercise of it is absolutely

lutely necessary for our safety and comfort ; for, while we are destitute of this religious grace, we are beset with the most painful doubts and uncertainties ; and are ignorant of the most important relations and connections. The dispensations of providence must be mysterious indeed, if we judge from the information of our senses alone. When we survey the confusion and disorder of the present state ; the ambition, treachery, and oppression of some, the suffering and miserable condition of others, the frailty and mortality of all, we are at a loss to conceive of the ends of Deity in the creation and preservation of such a world as this, and we are ready to cry out,—“ Why hast thou made all men in vain ?” If we were to abide solely by the information of our senses, we should be betrayed into numberless inconsistencies and errors : supposing this to be the case, we should have no privileges above the beasts of the field, or the fowls of heaven. But it was plainly
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SERM.
XVI.

**SERM.
XVI.**

the intention of divine Providence, that we should be governed by a higher principle, and that the boundaries of our knowledge should be more capacious; for which purpose we were enriched with intellectual faculties, and favoured with an express revelation from on high. All the dispensations of God to our world, were intended to excite and establish that principle of faith, of which I am now speaking; with this view he revealed himself to patriarchs and prophets; and in these latter days has established a religion on the most sure foundation, in the person of his Son. With this view the gospel has been handed down to us in its present form, viz. that we might believe, and that we might experience that peace and joy which flow from thence. It is the will of Providence in our present condition, that we should be governed by the faith of the gospel; that we should no longer be perplexed with the doubts of scepticism, that we should

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no more be imposed upon by fabulous traditions, but that we should be rooted and grounded in the faith of Jesus. This is our safe and peaceful retreat from the perplexities, uncertainties, and calamities of the present life ; even to fly for refuge to this stronghold, when all things in the estimation of sense make against us ; it is this which assists us in unfolding the mysterious conduct of providence ; or when that is impracticable in submitting, with meekness, to the divine will. Instead of perplexing ourselves with fruitless, and it may be, presumptuous inquiries, we are led by faith to this conclusion,—“ That all things shall work together for good to them that love God.” It is this divine and sacred principle which moderates our regards to the present world ; which affects our hearts with its vanity and uncertainty ; which teaches us to rejoice, as though we rejoiced not ; and to weep, as though we wept not. It is this which assists us in holding conver-

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SERM.
XVI.

sation with the heavenly state ; which brings near to the mind those objects, which are unseen and eternal, and which furnishes with those principles and motives, those hopes and consolations which could not be derived from any other quarter. We read of a principle of religious faith, as effecting the most glorious achievements, in a course of virtuous and holy obedience ; its power has been evidenced by the good and pious through all ages : the fame of those characters which were influenced by it, has been transmitted from the earliest ages to the present day ; “ by it the elders obtained a good report.” Do we read of Abel’s offering unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain ? Of Enoch’s being translated, that he should not see death ; of Noah’s preparing an ark to the saving of his house ; of Abraham’s leaving his own country at the command of God, and sojourning in the land of promise, as in a strange land ? Do we read of any that wrought righteousness ;

righteousness ; that obtained promises ; that stopped the mouths of lions ; that quenched the violence of fire ; that escaped the edge of the sword ; that out of weakness were made strong ; that waxed valiant in fight ; that turned to flight the armies of the aliens ? Do we read of women receiving their dead raised to life again ; of others that were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; of others that had trials of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea moreover of bonds and imprisonments ? Do we read of any that were stoned ; that were sawn asunder ; that were tempted ; that were slain by the sword ; that wandered about in sheep-skins, and goat-skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented ? These were all actuated by faith—that principle, which lies at the foundation of all good and virtuous actions ; which stands in a close alliance with justice, meekness, piety, and charity ; without which it is impossible to please God.

SERM.
XVI.

SERM.
XVI.

The nature of our present state and circumstances, evidences the utility and necessity of this principle ; in all the connections and events of life, we stand in need of nobler principles than those which are merely sensual and earthly. But when death approaches, the exercise of faith will be peculiarly seasonable. Its importance will increase in proportion to the awful extremity of our circumstances. Our senses can then only remind us, “ that flesh and heart are failing ;” “ that the place which once knew us, shall know us no more ;” that the period is arrived when we must bid farewell to the dearest names and relations of this earth. But faith makes the most important discoveries, and to all the sincere disciples of Christ, the most cheering and delightful ; it directs their regards to those regions of joy and felicity, which are at present invisible ; it brings to light, life, and immortality ; it divests the grave of its formidable terrors, and gains a complete conquest

conquest over it. It cheers the mind of the pious Christian in his last moments ; it enables him to make his end in peace ; to leave the world with calmness, and even with desire ; choosing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. SERM.
XVI.

On this part of the subject, we may make the two following reflections :

I. If the present state be intended for the exercise of religious faith, we ought to be diligent in the cultivation of so divine a principle. There are some who despise it as a species of enthusiasm ; who throw contempt upon it as a principle of blind credulity ; but every person of integrity and candour will doubtless conceive very highly of it. It is termed " precious faith," and deserves the appellation, as it is a principle which worketh by love, and is productive of the fruits of righteousness and charity. It is a principle the most
beneficial

SERM.
XVI.

beneficial to those who are actuated by it; it is full of all good fruits to others; it is the guardian of every thing great and valuable among men; it is a source of the most strong and pure consolation; it inspires the Christian with a peace and joy unutterable. How diligently should we attend upon those ordinances which are calculated to strengthen and confirm it! Why do we keep holy days; why do we call solemn assemblies, but that this work may be carried on with power? Why do we attend upon the table of the Lord, but that our faith in Christ may be rooted and confirmed, and that our converse with heavenly and spiritual objects may be more habitual and fervent?

2. If the present state is intended for the exercise of religious faith, it is a delightful thought that there is another, in which it shall be exchanged for sight. The days of absence and mourning will soon be ended; after a few
more

more sabbaths and sacraments, believing
Christians shall see as they are seen, and
know as they are known. They shall
behold God's face in righteousness, and
be satisfied awaking in the divine like-
ness: they shall no longer walk by faith
in a state of distance, sorrow, and dark-
ness; but shall be admitted to the im-
mediate presence of Jehovah, where is
fullness of joy; and to his right hand,
where are pleasures for evermore.

SERM.
XVI.

II. I now proceed to the second ob-
servation made on the text, viz. "that
the faith of which we have been hear-
ing, is tried and improved by the ad-
verse scenes of human life." The Chri-
stians to whom the apostle was now
writing, were in circumstances of great
affliction and suffering; they were in
heaviness through manifold tempta-
tions; they were encompassed with a
sad variety of distress and woe, in per-
mitting which, their heavenly Father
intended

SERM. intended the trial and improvement of
XVI. their faith.

1. The afflictions with which Christians are visited, give them an opportunity of making full proof of the sincerity of that faith which they have publicly professed. The hypocrite will not always call upon God; but the sincere Christian retains his piety in the most dark and gloomy seasons; he entertains good thoughts of God, not only in a time of prosperity, but in a season of affliction, and adversity also; he does not despise the chastening of the Lord, neither does he faint when he is rebuked of him. Afflictions are intended to try the strength of our faith and piety; they will make full proof of the meekness, patience, and fortitude of our tempers. It was supposed concerning Job, that if he was visited with some sore affliction, he would no longer hold fast his integrity and piety. "Put forth
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thine hand, says Satan, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face ;” but under the accumulated burden of his distress, this was his reflection : “ Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ?” A reflection full of humility and submission ; as if he had said, “ Who are we, that we should not expect some bitter drops in the cup of life ?” The day of adversity is set over against that of prosperity, for very wise and merciful reasons ; God afflicts not willingly, nor grieves the children of men ; there is a kind of necessity for those afflictions with which his servants are now visited ; they give them an opportunity of evidencing the sincerity of their professed faith, by a meek, patient, and pious submission to the divine will.

SERM.
XVI.

There are sufferings of a peculiar kind, to which the servants of God are sometimes exposed, which put their faith to a peculiar trial ; I mean the

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SERM.
XVI.

sufferings of persecution. Many profess a regard to religion in times of external ease and prosperity, who discard it as a vain and unprofitable thing, when they are called to deny themselves for its sake, or to make any important sacrifices to its honour and progress in the world. These having no root in themselves, when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended. There are those who draw back to perdition, being intimidated by the terrors of the present world; they are ashamed of Christ and his words, when brought before princes and rulers for his name's sake. On the other hand, these trials respecting true and sincere Christians, give proof of the genuineness of their faith and fortitude; they fear not to hold fast their integrity and piety, in opposition to secular and earthly powers; they count not their lives dear to them, when brought in competition with faith and a good conscience.

2. As

2. As afflictions and sufferings are intended for the *trial* of a Christian's faith, so likewise for its improvement. SERM.
XVI.

A season of affliction gives an opportunity to display the amiable dispositions of meekness, humility, and patience; such afflictions being sanctified by the grace of God, cleanse and purify the human heart. The servants of God come forth from this furnace, as gold purified seven times; they are more pious and devout in their tempers; more humble and gentle in their deportment; more constant and uniform in the discharge of their duty; more lively and fervent in their regards to religion, more heavenly and spiritual in the whole of their conversation; their hearts are hereby more weaned from this world, and their affections more entirely fixed upon another. These seasons of adversity are peculiarly favourable to serious reflection. They are then withdrawn from the cares of

U u 2 business,

SERM.
XVI.

business, the glare of vanity, and all the flatteries of pride and folly. The afflictions of the Christian, cause his graces to shine the brighter; from the cloud of adversity they break forth with a superior splendour. Others are struck with the excellency of his faith, meekness, and fortitude, and are led to admire the power and grace of that religion, which affords such strong consolations under the most formidable afflictions of human life.

They are struck with the amiableness of his subsequent deportment, when the chastisement of the Almighty is removed; they cannot fail to observe the benefit which he has received from his late afflictions, in that his temper is softened, his heart enlarged, and the fervour of his devotion sensibly increased. These trials have been the means of improving Christians in the several branches of true piety, and of preparing them for some high and exalted

alted station in the church of the first-
born above, which leads me to the

SERM.
XVI.

III. Third observation made on these words, viz. that a principle of faith, thus tried and improved, shall appear with peculiar glory at the second coming of Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ will come again, is the hope and consolation of all his followers; for this they are waiting with a cheerful expectation. It is not more certain that he ascended into heaven, than that he shall descend from thence; he was received by a cloud from the sight of his disciples, and he will hereafter come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him: he will then appear as the heir of all things, with the grandeur and majesty of universal judge: the proudest of his enemies will then be humbled, and all nature will appear in the most profound subjection to subserve the purposes of his glory. In this second appearance there will be no marks of weakness, poverty,

**SERM.
XVI.**

poverty, or suffering : he will come in the glory of his Father with the holy angels, and the inhabitants of heaven will attend upon him with the deepest veneration, to grace his triumph. Angels and seraphs will esteem it an honour thus to wait upon their descending Lord. One of these exalted spirits shall appear as his harbinger ; the trumpet shall sound, the dead shall be raised, and both small and great shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. Then those who cried out in atheistical triumph, "Where is the promise of his coming," shall tremble before him ; and those who, in a sense, crucified him afresh by their unbelief and impenitence, shall wail because of him. But while he appears to take vengeance on them that knew him not, and that obeyed not his gospel ; he comes for the compleat redemption of his people. When Christ, their life, shall appear, they also shall appear with him in glory : no work of faith, no labour of love,

love, shall escape the gracious notice of the Judge. The disgrace of their profession shall then be wiped off; and those who once endured the severest sufferings under the influence of faith and patience, shall then in the most compleat sense, inherit the promises. Jesus Christ will then treat them as his friends, and confer upon them the most public marks of praise and honour; and those heads that were once bowed down under the pressure of distress and sorrow, shall then be encircled with crowns of glory. That faith which was once despised and ridiculed, shall then appear to praise and honour at the coming of Jesus Christ. Those who once followed him amidst the disgrace and tribulation of the present state, shall then reign with him in glory—their Saviour shall redeem their bodies from the grave; corruption shall put on incorruption; mortality shall be swallowed up of life; nor shall they return any more to a state of pain, sorrow, and suffering,

SERM.
XVI.

SERM.
XVI.

fering, but shall be introduced to those mansions of joy and felicity, which Jesus has prepared at the Father's right hand. Here they shall be freed from every evil, and enjoy to the utmost of their enlarged capacities, pleasures the most exalted and refined. No inlet to evil in any form or degree; no more occasion of sorrow and distress, but happiness unmixed through eternal ages. Then those who once left father and mother, houses and lands, for the sake of Christ and his gospel, shall receive an hundred fold, and inherit everlasting life. Then shall that faith, which was once reproached and persecuted, be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, in the presence of God and the holy angels.

Permit me to close with a short improvement.

1. Are afflictions intended for the trial of faith? Let us not misinterpret these

these grievous dispensations of divine Providence. Many are prone to do this, especially in those cases where the spirits are depressed by the peculiar nature of their bodily affliction. Because they are visited in so awful a form, by the immediate hand of divine Providence, they are tempted to draw those conclusions, which are equally rash and comfortless. They conceive of themselves as objects of God's peculiar displeasure, forgetting the declaration of the holy apostle, "whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." They conclude from the gloomy mysterious nature of their affliction, that they are rejected of God; whereas the most grievous dispensations of divine Providence in the present state, cannot justify any such inference. The persons to whom the apostle addressed this epistle, were in heaviness through manifold afflictions; but this was no proof of their rejection of God; on the other hand,

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SERM.
XVI.

SERM.
XVI.

they were visited with those distresses and sufferings, that their faith might be tried and improved, and be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.

2. Are afflictions intended for the improvement of our faith? Let us behave with meekness and patience under them; let us impose upon our minds a reverential silence, and a most ready subjection to the divine will. Adversity is a season which may improve our tempers; a season in which we may do honour to our religion, by manifesting a spirit of meekness and devotion. Though for the present afflictions may be grievous, yet with the blessing of divine grace they finally yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

3. To conclude. Will the faith of true Christians be found unto praise, honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ? Let this teach them to
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set light by the reproach and contempt which they may meet with from an evil world. They may be despised as enthusiasts, on account of their professed faith in Jesus: they may be reproached as hypocrites, and held in derision and contempt, by the wicked and ungodly; but their witness is in heaven, and their record is on high: enjoying the testimony of a good conscience, they may make their appeal to God, and await the decisions of the last great day, when their righteousness shall be brought forth as the light, and their judgment as the noon day.

SERM.
XVI.

SERMON XVII.

ON THE NATURE OF TRUE HAPPINESS.

LUKE xii. 15.

For a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.

SERM.
XVII.

IN our conceptions of human life, we suffer ourselves to be determined by our present sensations, rather than by a calm comprehensive view of so important a subject. The present temperature of our bodies and spirits gives a complexion to those objects with which we are daily and familiarly conversant.

Experience

Experience informs mankind in general, SERM.
XVII.
that there is something capricious in their humours and inclinations: at one time they are disposed to be satisfied with every thing; at another time there is nothing which can give them pleasure: for a short season they are pleased and happy; and then, without any just cause, they indulge themselves in fretfulness and discontent. This mental caprice, so unfriendly to human enjoyment, is not to be controled by eminence of station, or by the affluence of wealth; so true is it that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance which he possesseth."

When we take a calm and philosophical survey of human affairs, the sum of happiness is more equally distributed, than what is obvious to the hasty conceptions of a superficial spectator. There is a great diversity in external appearances and possessions, but not so great in the means of true and solid enjoyment.

SERM.
XVII.

joyment. These are in the possession not only of the rich, but also of the poor. Intellectual, moral, and religious pleasures flow from a source totally distinct from any external possessions whatsoever. We are oft times deceived respecting that happiness, which is the proper portion of the human soul: the strength of our passions, the prejudices which we imbibe in early life, the influence of example, and the authority of a generally prevailing custom, are circumstances which have a tendency to mislead us in our inquiries after happiness. We are determined, by the authority of others, rather than by the dictates of an unbiassed judgment. Singularity is so dreaded, and prevailing fashion is so much the object of respect and reverence, that the most whimsical levities, and irrational excesses, must be implicitly admitted, when they have received the sanction of this capricious authority. Many who move within that circle, which the world terms the
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feat of bliss, have no other consolation than what is derived from the authority of that multitude with which they are associated, in an excess of folly, riot, and wickedness. Amidst the possessions of wealth, and the gratifications of luxury, they are yet estranged from the true secret of human enjoyment.

SERM.
XVII.

If we would properly regulate our conceptions on this head, we must take no partial survey of human nature ; we must form no judgment under the impetuous influence of irregular passions. We must examine the properties of this nature, its intellectual operations, its animal functions ; and from this survey of its different powers, we may with certainty infer, that human happiness consists in the harmony and due subordination of these various faculties ; that its proper basis does not rest on external possessions, but on the internal order and harmony of the soul.

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**SERM.
XVII.**

That this happiness, which is proper to man, does not consist in the abundance which he possesseth, may be illustrated in the following particulars :

i. The enjoyment of human life does not depend on very large acquisitions of wealth. The covetous man will not credit this, but reason and experience unite to confirm it.

An abundance of wealth cannot be conceived of as any way ornamental to an human character ; but as it stands connected with that generosity of mind which deviseth liberal things. To desire wealth merely for the sake of its acquisition, is a very mean and unworthy passion ; it is a disgrace to the nature of man, and a kind of curse upon civil society : it is a passion which buries itself in a heap of bright, but useless dust ; it can plead no higher origin than the bowels of the earth ; it is confined within the circle of a mere private interest, and

and incapacitates the mind for those enlarged and exalted pleasures which accompany the exertions of generosity and benevolence.

SERM.
XVII.

Does any one conceive of the enjoyment of life, as connected with the possession of accumulated wealth? Let him visit the abode of some fordid miser; let him mark the anxiety seated on his brow; the reluctance with which he purchases even the necessaries of life; and the indifference with which he contemplates the miseries and calamities of the poor and destitute. From hence let him proceed to that peaceful habitation where there is a competency, but no abundance: the necessities of life are here seasonably supplied, its conveniences are cheerfully procured, and a portion of this small substance is devoted with exquisite pleasure, to the assistance and relief of others. Let him notice, that serenity, contentment, and generosity which are seated here; and then

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SERM.
XVII.

let him confess, that a man's life does not consist in the abundance which he possesseth.

2. The enjoyment of life is not necessarily connected with—An extensive authority and influence. Mankind in general are very tenacious of an increase of power; this flatters their pride, and gratifies their ambitious desires; they please themselves with the idea of a number of dependants; they think of themselves above what they ought to think, and assume those supercilious airs of authority, which are very unbecoming and pernicious. Such frequently take an inhuman pleasure in trampling upon those whom providence has placed in an inferior station; thus they gratify a tyrannical humour, at the expence of the ease and happiness of others. But this pride is sometimes mortified, by the contempt of those to whose obeisance they thought themselves justly entitled. This ambition is frequently checked by

a just and spirited resistance on the part of the oppressed. The insolence of power is thus vexed and disappointed, and in proportion to the prevalence of these arbitrary passions, the subjects of them are exposed to the most humiliating and mortifying disappointments. The most fretful disquietude generally accompanies that thirst of power which is unreasonable in itself, and unfriendly to the peace and liberties of others,

SERM.
XVII.

Envy is likewise a frequent concomitant of this arbitrary power; this malevolent affection is jealous of the influence and preferment of others, and is mortified by the sight of superiority in any. The mind in this state is subjected to much secret disquietude and grief, which admit of no alleviation, from a consciousness of meekness, integrity, and benevolence; its tyrannical passions prey upon the vitals of all solid enjoyment. Extent of power no further contributes to human felicity, than

SERM.
XVII.

as it is qualified by a spirit of meekness and moderation. Human nature appears in a most pitiful and disgraceful light, when armed with the weapons of a lawless ambition, and when delighting itself in the most cruel depredations upon the liberties and happiness of others. By the abuse of that power with which providence has entrusted it, and which might have answered the most salutary purposes, it renders itself worthless and despicable; and becomes offensive to all wise and virtuous beings. So little does the mere acquisition of power administer to the real enjoyment of life, that unless it be confined within the limits of justice and moderation, it becomes the very bane of human felicity.

3. The enjoyment of human life does not consist in the immediate gratification of our senses and appetites. It is confessed, that the senses and appetites in a certain degree are so many inlets
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to happiness, in the present state. Those who are possessed of the fairest opportunity for these sensitive gratifications, are frequently ensnared and enslaved by them; such, laying the reins on the neck of their passions, are hurried by them into the most wild and riotous excesses; while reason, honour, conscience, and religion, are too often sacrificed to these sensual gratifications. Such may make a boast of their happiness, in being freed from the restraints of piety and religion; they may attempt to persuade others, that they alone know how to enjoy human life; but be not deceived; the boundaries of their felicity are very contracted; their pleasures are suited only to the inferior part of their natures, liable to a thousand interruptions and disquietudes, and when indulged to the greatest excess, become the most dissatisfactory and disgustful. An immoderate gratification of the senses and appetites robs the soul of its highest dignity; its faculties are
sensualized;

SERM.
XVII.

SERM.
XVII.

sensualized; reason is dethroned; the authority of conscience is set at defiance; the rights of known virtue and chastity are hereby violated; to which may be added, secret dissatisfaction, fear and shame, remorse and horror. The enjoyment of life cannot consist in those pleasures, which draw after them such a train both of personal and relative distress; pleasures which emaciate the constitution, which enervate the soul, and which render old age disgraceful and burdensome. No; moderation and temperance are the only means of the peaceful acquisition of health and happiness.

The abundance of our possessions considered in reference to wealth, power, or sensual pleasures, is not any way essential to the enjoyment of life. Such abundance is not necessarily connected with the perfection of human felicity; for many, destitute of such means of enjoyment, are, nevertheless, possessed of
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the invaluable treasure of true happiness. SERM.
XVII.

The seat of this bliss comes now to be considered. And here it may be observed, that that happiness which is proper to man, has its seat in the soul. It consists in the improvement of the understanding; in the approbation of conscience; and in the order and harmony of the affections and passions. It is not necessary, in order to exalt the pleasures of the rational and spiritual life, to deny, that there are others of an inferior kind. The bodily senses and animal appetites are doubtless so many sources of happiness; to affirm otherwise, would not only be contrary to universal experience, but even to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of the great author of our being. Our senses and appetites, when under due regulation, are a source of real, though not the highest degree of happiness. Can any one say, that he receives no pleasure from

SERM.
XVII.

from gratifying the cravings of hunger or thirst; from the sense of seeing, hearing, or smelling. But the pleasures of sense, though experienced in a very high degree, are not satisfactory to the human soul; they are confined within the circle of a few objects, and leave the mind subjected to very uneasy and restless desires. The bold efforts of an intellectual nature are not to be subdued by mere animal gratifications; its true happiness can alone be promoted by the order and harmony of its faculties and affections.

There is a certain mental gratification occasioned by fresh acquisitions of knowledge. This desire of knowledge strongly actuates the human mind; it is this which prompts it to the most laborious researches; which fatigues the body by a too strenuous application; and which, in some instances, makes a sacrifice of more common enjoyments to the uninterrupted pursuits of philosophy and

and science. There is a certain pleasure, unknown to those whose ideas scarcely extend beyond the boundaries of their senses, accompanying the improvement of the human understanding. To detect error, to discover truth, to correct the childish extravagance of our ideas, and to form mature and solid judgments, are gratifications manly and rational. To think and to judge free from the control of prejudice, to exert the energies of an enlightened mind, to enrich our imaginations with scenes moral and spiritual, are sources of happiness peculiar to a reasonable nature. But human happiness is not to be attained by the mere acquisition of knowledge; but by a proficiency in that which is the most excellent in itself, and with which we have the most intimate and important concern. This kind of knowledge is religious and divine knowledge; it is conversant with spiritual and eternal objects; it makes the most sublime and

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XVII.

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SERM.
XVII.

useful discoveries; it informs us of the most important and sacred relations, and traverses those regions which are invisible and heavenly. It is a knowledge which informs us of religious obligations, and which is accompanied with a very quick and powerful apprehension of divine truth. It is a knowledge which improves and dignifies the soul, and furnishes it with an aptitude to every good word and work. It is a knowledge accompanied with the testimony of a good conscience. The approbation of this principle is absolutely necessary to human happiness: were our knowledge ever so refined or enlarged, it would prove an occasion of the most substantial misery, unless it were accompanied with that form of conduct which is approved by an enlightened conscience. This principle in the soul of man, approves or condemns according to the nature of our respective actions: this principle has exerted itself with vigour, even in situations of great error

error and ignorance. The Heathens themselves were not destitute of information from this quarter ; their consciences either accused, or else excused them. Men must make a very fearful progress in vice and wickedness, and must take great pains to gain the mastery over every ingenuous principle and affection, before they can arrive at that insensibility which is past feeling. Human happiness consists in the approbation of a good conscience ; this is that rejoicing of which the apostle speaks, and this is the rejoicing of every good and upright character throughout all ages. Reflection in this case furnishes solitude with the most delightful pleasures. A man no longer shuns communion with himself as burdensome or terrifying : He is raised above the malice and reproaches of his enemies, and amidst the greatest infelicities of human life, he is yet in possession of a most invaluable source of happiness. The greatest abundance could not administer

SERM.
XVII.

SERM.
XVII.

any pleasure or joy, compared with this; nor could the greatest increase of grandeur secure any lasting enjoyment, separate from the secret approbation of this principle. An accusing conscience will diffuse a gloom through the gayest moments; it will occasionally frown upon us in the most public and dissipating scenes; it will spoil the enjoyment of every innocent pleasure, and haunt the shades of solitude and retirement.

Human enjoyment is, moreover, necessarily connected with the order and harmony of our affections and passions. These are implanted in human nature, to answer very wise and valuable purposes; they are so many principles which enrich and enliven the human frame. They are intended to subserve the most important ends, both in the personal and social life;—ends which cannot be effected but by their due regulation. Without this there will be a constant tumult in our breasts; the
passions

passions of our nature will resemble so many jarring principles, which are continually counteracting each other. Where the passions are subjected to reason and religion, each will be kept in its proper place ; a restraint will be laid upon that excess, which is the source of all moral disorder ; self-love will exert itself in a proper regard to our personal interests, without infringing the rights of justice, or damping the ardour of generosity and benevolence. The whole œconomy, if I may so speak, will remain in a state of undisturbed order, and tranquillity. The stream of life will then flow on in as smooth and gentle a current as can be expected on this side heaven. Human nature will then be tending towards perfection, when its inferior principles and passions no longer gain the ascendancy over us ; when the dictates of reason, conscience, and religion are habitually and constantly obeyed. The happiness of man then does not consist in the abundance of wealth,

SERM.
XVII.

SERM.
XVII.

wealth, in the extent of power, nor in the variety of sensual gratifications, but in that self-government, rational order, and spiritual harmony which has been described above.

This subject may be further illustrated from consulting the genius and tendency of Christianity. The general complexion of this religion is of a moral and spiritual nature. It has its seat in the heart, and enriches its subjects, not with the wealth or glory of this world, but with the ornamental graces of the Christian temper. This religion enforces upon all Christians a degree of religious mortification and abstinence; it commands them to labour, not so much for the meat which perisheth, as for that which endureth to eternal life. It calls upon them not to lay up treasures on earth, but in heaven. That faith of which the gospel makes such frequent mention, and on which such stress is laid in the sacred scriptures, is

a religious grace, by which we are raised SERM.
XVII.
from the death of sin, to the life of
righteousness. By the exercise of this
principle, true Christians are represent-
ed by the apostle, as overcoming the
world; by this they are allied to the
Son of God their glorified Redeemer;
and by this they hold communion with
spiritual objects in heavenly places. The
holy spirit is communicated with a view
to promote the perfection and happi-
ness of their natures, in the practice of
universal righteousness, and in the ex-
ercise of all pious and generous affec-
tions. Such live a new, rational, and
divine life, and they no longer remain
in habitual subjection to any depraved
or corrupt passion, but their happiness
consists in an increasing conformity to
the image of the Deity. It is their
meat and drink to do the will of their
heavenly Father.

If we consult the example of our Sa-
viour, and those ordinances which he
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SERM.
XVII.

has instituted ; it will from thence appear, that human happiness is of an internal and spiritual nature. The abundance of secular power and grandeur has an inferior value stamped upon it both by the institutes and example of Jesus. His faithful followers, through all ages, are in a very just and emphatic sense, dead to this world, and all its boasted vanities and glory. “ They are dead, and their life is hid with Christ in God.” It is the design of the gospel to introduce them to life in the noblest sense beyond the grave ; there they will become as the angels of God, who always delight to do his will. There it will appear, that the happiness of their natures does not depend on eternal possessions ; but on that moral rectitude and universal holiness, without which no one shall see the Lord.

We shall close our meditations on this subject with the following inferences :

I. If

1. If a man's life consisteth not in the abundance which he possesseth—then true happiness is yet a secret in respect to many characters in our world. It is to be feared, that this is the case in respect to the greater part of mankind. To bring the subject home to ourselves; in how many instances have we imposed upon ourselves by lying vanities?

2. What we have heard, exposes the folly and vice of covetousness. The text is urged, by our blessed Saviour, as a persuasive against a temper so vile and unprofitable. "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

3. From what has been advanced, we infer, in the last place, that it is a part both of wisdom and duty to cultivate a spirit of moderation and temperance, respecting all our earthly desires and pursuits. Having food and raiment,

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SERM.
XVII.

let us be therewith content. Let us rejoice, as though we rejoiced not, let us weep, as though we wept not. This is the language of reason and philosophy; of experience and religion. "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."

SERMON

SERMON XVIII.

ON RELIGIOUS ZEAL.

GALATIANS iv. 18.

*It is good to be zealously affected always
in a good thing.*

BY zeal we understand a certain earnestness or fervour of mind in the pursuit of any object which we conceive of as excellent or valuable. It will express itself in various forms agreeable to the diversity of our views and prospects; and consists not in a mere calm decision of the understanding, but in a conviction strong and interesting, such as enlivens the powers of the soul, and

SERM.
XVIII.

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SERM.
XVIII.

enkindles in the heart correspondent affections.

When this zeal is conversant with the great objects of faith and devotion, it is termed *religious*, or as the apostle expresses it, "a zeal for God." Thus it is distinguished from the ardour of those pursuits, which are confined to the wealth and honours of this world, and which have no concern with the interests of truth, piety, and virtue.

A certain degree of zeal is absolutely necessary to constitute the character of a true Christian; for it is impossible to conceive of a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ, as absolutely indifferent to the success and progress of the religion of the gospel. If he, from the heart, believes its facts and doctrines, surely he must feel himself deeply interested in such extraordinary discoveries of the divine wisdom and mercy; in respect to himself, he must view religion as the
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one thing needful, and in respect to others, he cannot but ardently wish that they may for themselves choose that good part, which shall never be taken away from them.

SERM.
XVIII.

The religion of Christ is not a system of uninteresting truths, or mere speculative doctrines, but is calculated to promote present peace and satisfaction, while it lays the foundation of a lively hope of everlasting happiness beyond the grave. Our zeal for this religion will be first and principally directed towards ourselves, and the cultivation and improvement of our own hearts in all its amiable graces and virtues. Without *this*, our zeal respecting its propagation in the world will appear with an ill grace; and must reflect a great dishonour upon ourselves, as well as do discredit to that cause, in which we pretend to be so zealously affected.

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SERM.
XVIII.

The characteristics of a truly Christian zeal, with some motives to induce us to cultivate that zeal, will form the plan of our present meditations.

First, The characteristics of a truly Christian zeal. They are the following: "*Sincerity*," "*Knowledge*," "*Benevolence*," and "*Perseverance*."

1. *Sincerity*. A sincere zeal in the cause of Christ, consists in a pure regard to the interests of truth, the honour of the gospel, and the simplicity of its worship and discipline. Thus it stands opposed to all false and fictitious pretensions of zeal, such as assume the mask of religion, to subserve the purposes of a present interest, or the gratification of vain and ambitious passions.

Many such zealots have been found within the confines of the Christian church, who have been actuated by motives mean and disingenuous, and who have

have had a principal respect to their own preferment and glory, instead of the credit and progress of Christian truth and piety. Such a zeal as this must be destitute of sincerity, since its secret intentions and designs are contrary to its external pretended professions. It is passionate in its exertions, impatient of disappointment, and carries itself with an air of pride and jealousy. It is actuated by strife and envy, or other ambitious and worldly motives. Sooner or later it will not fail to discover its genuine spirit, a spirit no where countenanced by the gospel, but very severely reprov'd and condemned. Such a kind of zeal may have its reward, in the gratification of its vanity and ambition; but it must expect no other; for it can never lift up its head with glory, either in the presence of conscience here, or at the tribunal of Christ hereafter.

SERM.
XVIII.

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SERM.
XVIII.

That zeal which is truly Christian, has its foundation in the Christian temper; is accompanied with the practice of its exalted virtues, and is especially characterized by a genuine simplicity and godly sincerity. It has no sinister views or motives, but is purely actuated by a regard to the honour of Christ, and the interests of his spiritual kingdom. If these be promoted, it is abundantly recompensed and satisfied.

Should its own exertions fail of success, it rejoices in the success of others, and is by no means jealous of those instruments whom it has pleased God, in a more remarkable manner, to own and bless. It did not seek its own glory, but that of the gospel of truth and righteousness; if this be promoted, it is abundantly satisfied; it therein rejoices, "yea, and will rejoice."

2. *Knowledge* is another characteristic of that zeal which is countenanced and approved

approved by the Christian system. It must be judicious, as well as sincere. This will be necessary to regulate its ardour, and to direct it to objects of the greatest utility. If it be not a zeal according to knowledge, it may defeat its own good purposes, and expose both itself and its cause to contempt. Some have betrayed a great weakness and ignorance in their zealous exertions, and this in a degree so glaringly absurd, as to grieve the friends of revealed religion, while it has furnished its enemies with an occasion of triumph. Such have attempted to defend religion, on principles very exceptionable and erroneous. They have annexed to it the peculiarities of their own prejudices; and to the neglect of weightier matters, have laid a principal stress upon those which are of little or no importance. They have been more concerned about the traditions of men, than the clear and express commands of God. They have been jealous of the credit

SERM.
XVIII.

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SERM.
XVIII.

and authority of the former, while they have been very indifferent in respect to the sacred obligations of the latter.

An enlightened mind will easily distinguish between those principles which lie at the foundation of the Christian system, and those various superstructures which have been erected upon it by the professors of the gospel in different ages. The one in itself is invariably the same, and bears the broad signature of the seal of heaven; the other has assumed a variety of forms, agreeable to the different situations and prejudices of a multitude of professors.

That zeal which is according to knowledge, will regulate its exertions in conformity to the sober dictates of truth, and agreeable to the maxims of prudential wisdom. It is not only sincerely and ardently desirous of promoting a good cause; but also makes choice of those means which carry with them
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the greatest probability of success. Every thing in itself lawful may not be expedient in every situation; but the most excellent means must be adopted to the peculiar state of men's minds and prejudices. They are not to be taken by storm, nor is the moral and intellectual conquest to be effected by violence.

SERM.
XVIII.

In promoting the cause of religious truth, much depends both on the time and manner of address. The one must be seasonable, and the other must be mild, modest, and inoffensive. We must endeavour to convince by the most cogent arguments, and to beseech and intreat with the meekness of affection. We must patiently wait the most favourable seasons, and diligently improve the fairest opportunities. That zeal is harsh and criminal indeed, which allows its antagonist neither "common honesty, nor common sense." The goodness of a cause can never sanctify such ignorance, pride, and bitterness; and such

SERM.
XVIII

a zeal is equally indiscreet and unchristian.

Christian zeal must, moreover, always blend the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. It is not called to cast its pearls before swine, nor must it pursue any measures but what are fully authorised by the gospel, and agreeable to the dictates of a sound understanding. Had this more generally been the case, religious zeal would never have been disgraced, and the gospel of our Saviour would never have suffered on account of the ignorant fervour of its professed friends. I may also add, the labours of many in the cause of truth would not have been so fruitless and ineffectual, and the pleasure of the Lord might have prospered in their hands, had not their own imprudence and rashness most effectually prevented it.

3. Benevolence

3. *Benevolence* also is an essential qualification of religious zeal. Zeal thus qualified, is but a different modification of charity. It is love that animates all its instructions and all its reproofs. Its various exertions centre here, and are so many expressions of disinterested kindness to our fellow-creatures and brethren.

SERM.
XVIII.

Zeal partaking of this property, stands opposed to every species of malice and severity; and is altogether a stranger to that persecution which has disgraced the annals of ecclesiastical history. It is mild in its address, gentle in its carriage, and full of compassion to the interests of all. It is not absorbed on the one hand, in an inordinate self-love; nor is it wild and extravagant in its efforts on the other. Its pretensions are sober, its operations are regular, and animated by the just and noble principles of diffusive benevolence. It is a zeal not partial in its judgment, nor malignant in
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SERM.
XVIII.

its censures; it injureth no one, it thinks evil of no one; like the wisdom from above it is peaceable and gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits.

It is likewise friendly to the peace and good order of civil society; no way interfering with the just, and unalienable rights of mankind. It is also patient of resistance and contradiction, using no weapons that are carnal and sensual, but solely avails itself of that sacred armour, with which it is furnished by the word and spirit of God.

4. *Perseverance* is another characteristic of Christian zeal. That attachment to the profession of the gospel, which is not founded on the principles of sincere conviction, and a genuine love of divine truth, may flame with violence for a short time; but should it meet with difficulties and dangers, it will soon be extinguished. It springs
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up on a sudden, but it has no root in itself, for which reason it withereth away. Should persecution arise because of the truth, this professional zeal will doubtless take offence, and no longer attempt to defend a cause so full of temporal inconvenience and hazard. But that which is truly Christian, is not thus diverted from its object. The honour and progress of divine truth it keeps steadily in view, amidst the greatest discouragements and difficulties, nor is its ardour to be abated by the most violent opposition. It is faithful even unto death.

SERM.
XVIII.

It appears then, from this part of our subject, that religious zeal, upright in its intentions, discreet in its management, and kind and benevolent in all its operations, is truly respectable, and ought to be cultivated with the greatest diligence by all the faithful followers of Christ. It has indeed been disgraced by the wild extravagance of bigots and enthusiasts,

SERM. enthusiasts, nevertheless it is a great
XVIII. duty, and may be enforced by

II. Certain motives very cogent and powerful. These, in the *second place*, now come to be considered.

1. The importance of the cause is an argument for zeal. It is that of truth and piety; than which nothing can be of greater consequence, either to ourselves or mankind in general. Every labour and every sacrifice it will abundantly compensate, and we must not think of bringing in competition with it any present gratification or interest. The light of truth how refreshing to the mind, and the consolations of piety how soothing and animating to the heart of man! When this light breaks in upon the soul, it affords a pleasure the most rational and noble. It rectifies our former mistakes and errors, and dispels the darkness of ignorance and superstition. It frees the mind from
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an inglorious bondage; and invests it with a liberty the most rational and divine. It makes our way clear before us, and directs our feet into the paths of peace and righteousness. The day spring from on high visits us, and a morning light breaks in upon the soul, shining more and more unto the perfect day. Christianity, in particular, is the last and noblest dispensation of religion; in itself absolutely perfect, and calculated above every other to improve the mind, sanctify the heart, and furnish it with the richest peace and comfort. Its promises are so precious, its discoveries so clear, and its prospect into futurity so reviving, that it may be justly described as "the glory that excelleth."

SERM.
XVIII.

To be zealously attached to such a system of faith and morals, of grace and hope, is of the last importance to ourselves, as well as of the greatest consequence to others; and such an attachment may extend its influence beyond

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**SERM.
XVIII.**

the limits of our present apprehensions. To be indifferent in our profession would be highly criminal, since the claims of our religion are so powerful, and its obligations of such sacred and universal concern. In endeavouring to promote its interests, we act up to our character as Christians, and approve ourselves the most friendly to the welfare and happiness of all around us. It is a duty which we owe to our God and Saviour, and also to our brethren of mankind; a duty not to be dispensed with; for our Christian profession supposes us to be convinced of the truth of the gospel, and if convinced of its truth, surely we cannot fail to be affected with its importance to our own happiness, and the salvation of others. There is every thing to animate us in our high calling as Christians. A holy fervour should enliven our religious and devotional services; and we should embrace every opportunity, according to our abilities, to defend the divine authority
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of the gospel against the objections of SERM.
XVIII.
infidels; and above all should be careful to recommend this religion, by a life and example agreeable to its precepts, and conformable to the pattern of its great author.

2. Farther. The opposition which this cause meets with from others, should enliven our ardour in a zealous defence of it. We must not suffer ourselves to be intimidated by difficulties, or discouraged by the frowns and censures of the world. However low the interests of truth in any particular age or country, or however formidable the power that opposes it, we need not despair. Every effort made in its defence, though not sensibly discerned by us, has its use under the providence of God—and under every present discouragement, in this we may console ourselves, that no weapon formed against it, either by the subtlety or rage of men, will finally be prospered. It has had its

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SERM.
XVIII.

enemies in all ages, and under various descriptions. Some have endeavoured to subvert the foundations of virtue and piety, by calling in question God's moral government, and by denying the eternal and immutable obligations of his righteous laws. Men of this complexion have been very assiduous and active in diffusing these pernicious and corrupt principles, and if we on our part be indifferent to religion, they on *theirs* are far from being luke-warm in their enmity and opposition.

Others, under a different description, are disaffected to the gospel, while they acknowledge the authority of what has been understood by natural religion. These publicly declare their sentiments, and have discovered a zeal in the defence of them. This being the case, how unbecoming the friends of divine revelation to sit down in a silent indifference.

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It may likewise be observed, without the least violation of candour, that there is no little opposition made to the truth within the boundaries of the professing church. There are those who imprison the truth in unrighteousness; and others who profess it in a very degenerate and corrupt form; their prejudices are strong, and their wild superstitious zeal very active and officious. I refer to no particular denomination of professors, but conceive of it as applicable to the patrons of error, and the lords of the heritage of God of all descriptions, and of every communion.

SERM.
XVIII.

The religion of our blessed Lord and Saviour has doubtless been corrupted; and it behoveth every sincere lover of truth, to use his utmost endeavours to separate the precious from the vile; the chaff from the wheat; and to make a distinction the most public and decisive between the commandments of God, and the traditions of men.

3. To

**SERM.
XVIII.**

3. To quicken us in a firm and fervent attachment to the sacred cause of truth and piety, let us frequently reflect on those examples of zeal which are recorded in the scriptures, and others with which we may have been acquainted. The former have obtained a good report ; their memory is precious, and handed down to us with every circumstance that can excite our esteem, or awaken our emulation. Patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs, stand foremost on the list—no sacrifices they deemed too great ; no difficulties did they conceive of as insurmountable ; nor were violent persecutions able to deter them from a persevering faithful adherence to the cause they had espoused. Above all, should we place before us the perfect pattern of our Lord and Saviour Jesus ; who in this, as in every other respect, has the pre-eminence. With what unremitting diligence did he do the will of his heavenly Father ! With what unabated ardour did he fulfil

fil

fil all righteousness! The opposition of **SERM. XVIII.**
enemies, the contradiction of sinners, served to enliven the fervour of his zeal. This zeal animated his daily labours, his nocturnal devotions, and fired his soul with holy resolution, under a pressure of the most accumulated distresses. As his followers, we are under peculiar obligations to imitate his pattern, and to imbibe his spirit. Indolence and sloth ill become us. Let us then be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for our labour in him will not be in vain. A day is coming when every work of faith and labour of love will meet with a most munificent and gracious reward. Therefore, my brethren, "be not weary in well doing, for in due season ye shall reap, if ye faint not."

SERMON XIX.

ON THE EFFICACY OF THE GOSPEL IN THE
EXTIRPATION OF ERROR.

MATTHEW XV. 13.

*Every plant which my heavenly Father hath
not planted shall be rooted up.*

SERM.
XIX.

THE language of our text is metaphorical, and may be conceived of as descriptive of the entire extirpation of error and depravity, under the moral administration of the gospel. This is not to take place in an instant, much less is it to be effected by these violent and

and coercive measures, which have so often been adopted by the wrath of man, under the influence of an unhal-
lowed and persecuting zeal. We are
patiently to wait for it in the final issue
of things, under the government of a
being infinitely wise and good. At the
same time exerting ourselves in further-
ing this cause, by vigorously pursuing
all those measures which are justified
by the dictates of sober reason, and sanc-
tified by the meekness and charity of
that religion which, as Christians, we
possess.

SERM.
XIX.

Our blessed Saviour, the great teacher
and head of the church, was constantly
employed in promoting the interests of
righteousness, in connection with our
final salvation and happiness. He has
instructed the world with an authority
and majesty peculiar to himself. Even
his enemies were astonished at his doc-
trine, and the people heard him gladly.
He was not discouraged by any difficul-

D d d

ties

SERM.
XIX.

ties or dangers, while accomplishing his Father's pleasure in the establishment of that spiritual kingdom, which now lifts up its head with a superior glory, notwithstanding the opposition of contending powers in various forms, and from various quarters.

Error and corruption were generally prevalent at the time of our Lord's public ministry. Superstition had entered its unwarrantable claims, and a blind respect to superior authority easily admitted them. Those who were seated in the chair of Moses, had corrupted the pure religion of Jehovah, and instructed the people in certain tenets inconsistent with the obligations of true piety and virtue. They not only made additions to the laws of heaven, by enforcing certain human devices, but when the traditions of men were brought into competition with the commands of God, they preferred the former to the latter, and laid less stress upon judgment, mercy,

cy, and fidelity, than upon certain external rites of worship.

SERM.
XIX.

At the time of our Saviour's appearance, there were many degenerate plants, which had taken deep root within the confines of the Lord's vineyard: that vineyard so favourably situated, and so securely defended. These our Saviour came to extirpate, by exposing the dangerous and corrupt fallacy of certain popular errors, which were countenanced by public teachers, and which had received the sanction of high authority.

The zeal with which he exerted himself in this great work, awakened the jealousy and indignation of those persons who were interested in the delusion and ignorance of the people, and whose authority was not to be controverted with impunity. Does our Saviour, as in the context, convict them of setting aside one of the commandments which

SERM.
XIX.

have respect to filial duty? They can make no reply in their own vindication, but they can be angry, and are determined to give vent to their malicious rage, by calumniating a character, the most innocent and illustrious, and by stirring up the people to all the outrages of a violent persecution.

Our blessed Lord came not only to extirpate every plant of vice and error, but to sow the seeds of truth, piety, peace, and charity. This must be evident to every one who reflects on the purity of Christ's doctrine, in connection with his high and perfect pattern. And although his ministry, accompanied with the ensigns of a divine authority, was not attended with that universal success which might at first have been expected; nevertheless this may easily be accounted for, by reason of the strength of confirmed habits and inveterate prejudices, in connection with secular power, which are not easily or suddenly

suddenly overborne, as appears from the testimony of all ages. SERM.
XIX.

Had our Saviour's religion been accommodated to the pride of philosophy, or the insolence of power, it would doubtless have been acceptable to many wise and mighty in the world. But as its grand object was the extirpation of long established and favourite vices, no wonder it should be treated with neglect and disdain by those men in high stations, who were blind leaders of the blind, and whose interest it was to keep the people in a state of blind subjection to their authority,

In the wild deserts of barbarism and idolatry, we are not surprized to find many noxious weeds, to speak in allusion to the metaphor in our text, many plants which our heavenly Father has not planted. But this was likewise the case within the sacred enclosure of the professing

SERM. professing church, at the time of our
XIX. Saviour's appearance.

The prophetic declaration in our text may be conceived of as having respect to each, under the moral administration of the gospel.

I. We shall consider how far it has been accomplished,

II. We will advert to some circumstances which have prevented its full accomplishment. And then,

III. We will contemplate the glory of that period, when this prophecy of our Saviour shall receive its consummation.

I intreat your fixed attention to these several particulars.

I. How far has this prophetic declaration been already accomplished?

This

This only can be ascertained from SERM.
XIX.
historical facts, in connection with the present state of Christ's religion in the world. Its first progress was so rapid and extensive, that we cannot help conceiving of it, as a beautiful comment on those several metaphors which our Saviour adopted in the description of his kingdom. "As the lightning that lighteneth out of one part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened."* "The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all seeds; but when it is grown up, it is the greatest among herbs; so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." These metaphors were so many predictions of the rise and progress of Christianity in the world.

* Matt. xiii. 33.

SERM.
XIX.

world. And they convey to us very sublime ideas both of its divine origin and power.

Under the apostolic ministry it produced effects the most extraordinary and novel in the moral world, of which we can give no satisfactory account, but on the principle of the divine authority of this religion. The apostles and first preachers of Christianity were most of them men of plain manners, and uncultivated minds, who would not avail themselves of the sophistry of science, nor flatter their followers with any of the honours or riches of this world. They had no interest with the rulers among the Jews, nor with the princes and philosophers among the Gentiles, and were deprived of all countenance from the most reputable and powerful characters of the age. They were defamed and persecuted, and treated with every mark of ignominy. Their commission, like that of their Lord and Master,

ter, had for its object the extirpation of vice and error, in connection with the promulgation of that scheme of mercy, which he had sealed or ratified with his blood.

SERM.
XIX.

Under every circumstance of apparent disadvantage, their ministry is successful and triumphant over the prejudices and passions of thousands. Multitudes are converted to the faith of Jesus, and the gospel is preached through several parts of a vast empire. It has triumphed over vain imaginations, inveterate prejudices, strong passions, superstitious ceremonies, and idolatrous rites. Thrones and dominions, principalities and powers have in vain armed themselves against it. The more they have attempted to suppress its rising, with a greater power, with an encreasing glory has it lifted up its head.

How many plants which our heavenly Father has not planted, have been al-

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ready

SERM.
XIX.

ready rooted up under the moral administration of the gospel. How has it enlightened the darkness of the understanding ! How has it changed and purified the heart ! What striking and sensible effects has it produced, in the dispositions and practices of those who have cordially received it, in all ages ! Humility and meekness, purity and love, have been substituted in the place of pride and passion, licentiousness and revenge. So striking an alteration has been effected in the moral and spiritual character of sincere Christians, that it may be compared to a new creation. " Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." A sincere convert to the religion of Jesus, in the first age of the gospel, became as it were a new man. He was regarded as such by his neighbours and acquaintance, being distinguished by the strictness of his morals, and the uniform integrity and devotion of his life.

In

In succeeding ages, in which persons have been educated from their earliest years in the Christian faith, if the change has not been so striking, the sanctifying power of Christianity has been the same: ever favourable to the progress of truth and holiness, and inimical to every principle of error and depravity. Every plant which our heavenly Father has not planted, it has been gradually extirpating from the hearts and lives of all those who are upright and conscientious in their Christian profession.

SERM.
XIX.

I am sensible that an objection here obtrudes itself, founded on the small proficiency of Christianity in the present day, in connection with the gross errors and vices which obtain among those who publicly profess this religion. But this does not affect the truth of the declaration in the text, as it has respect to the moral tendency of the gospel, nor does it bring into suspicion our

SERM. Saviour's character as a prophet, if we
XIX. view our text in the light of a predic-
tion.

II. There are certain circumstances which have impeded the progress of Christianity, and suspended its moral and sanctifying influence. These deserve our consideration in the second place.

From the early and rapid spread of Christianity in the time of the apostolic ministry, we might be led to conclude, that long ere this the religion of the gospel would have become the religion of the world, and that idolatry, superstition, and false worship, would have been extirpated from among all the nations of the earth. But the passions and prejudices both of weak and wicked men have intervened. To these principally must we refer, as the grand reason why Christianity has made no greater progress in the world, in its promulgation

promulgation among the various tribes of men, and in its moral and sanctifying power.

SERM.
XIX.

The most excellent gift of heaven, the gospel of grace and truth, has been perverted and corrupted. This was especially the case, from that æra when it was patronized by the powers of this world, which were employed in fabricating a system of religion under the Christian name, altogether unlike to the pure and simple gospel of the blessed Jesus. When councils were convened, creeds established, and anathemas denounced against all those who did not receive the doctrines of men with that reverence and submission, which are alone due to the commandments of God. Many principles were then taught and enjoined, equally repugnant to the dictates of reason, and the plain teachings of Christ and his apostles: principles borrowed from the speculations of philosophers, or which originated

SERM.
XIX.

nated in gross depravity, the tendency of which was very unfavourable to the pure and sublime morals of the gospel. In this state of things, authority established a corrupt scheme of religion, under the sanction of the Christian name: a scheme which confirmed infidels in their scepticism, and the influence of which has diffused itself through succeeding ages: How far it has affected the interests of truth in the protestant churches, it does not become me to determine. But it behoves every conscientious Christian to examine the gospel for himself, that his faith may not rest on the foundation of human authority, but on that of the wisdom and testimony of God, by Christ and his apostles.

As within the inclosure of the Jewish church, at the time of our Saviour's appearance, there were plants which our heavenly Father had not planted; so likewise have there been principles professed

fessed and enjoined by those who called themselves Christians, which are no where to be found in the writings of Moses and the prophets, nor in the gospel of Jesus Christ. By reason of these, the progress of the gospel has been hindered, and the efficacy of its purifying influence has been diminished.

SERM.
XIX.

When the right of private judgment was given up, and a foreign power acknowledged in the church, no wonder that superstition and enthusiasm erected their standards, to which the multitude flocked with such eager zeal for a series of ages. No wonder that the religion of the gospel was mutilated, and certain opinions adopted by professors, not only erroneous, but also of a very pernicious tendency. Error in principle has opened the way to practical enormities. It has alienated the mind from the love of God, and our neighbour, while it has been tenacious of those doctrines or ceremonies, of which the scriptures are
totally

SERM.
XIX.

totally ignorant. Both the progress and the moral efficacy of the Christian religion, in this case, must be greatly injured. And it is well known, that some of its professors have been so grossly vicious, so unjust and oppressive, that strangers have rejected the gospel with abhorrence, without examination, and without regret. Had the lives of those who at different times, and in different countries, have assumed the Christian name, been more exemplarily virtuous, holy, and beneficent, and had they been as zealous to propagate pure Christianity among Indians and strangers, as to promote the interests of their ambition and avarice, a more effectual door would long since have been opened for the progress and triumph of our divine religion, and many plants which our heavenly father has not planted, and which continue like so many noxious weeds, to disgrace the vineyard of the Lord, would have been rooted up.

That

That the religion of our Saviour should have been corrupted, and that by this means its progress should have been impeded, needs not to shock our faith; for it has been predicted by the apostles, who foretold it in terms the most explicit and striking. The power of error began to work in the apostolic age.* The man of sin has since been revealed in various horrid and shocking forms, and his influence may have been of much larger extent than is generally apprehended. Pernicious errors, intolérant authority, in matters of faith, wherever found, in whatever country, or in whatever religious communion, mark his footsteps, and proclaim his power.

SERM.
XIX.

We are in the midst of a grand scheme, a part of which has already been accomplished, in the adorable and unsearchable judgments of the Almighty. It is our duty, as Christians, with
F f f faith

* 2 Thess. ii.

SERM.
XIX.

faith and reverence, to wait for the accomplishment of what yet remains, in respect to the final issue of the gospel kingdom.

III. I observe, in the third place, that we have reason to believe, that this issue will be very glorious indeed, and that the prediction in our text will then be fulfilled, in a sense hitherto unknown to the world.

Under the moral administration of the gospel, a very extraordinary revolution has already been effected in the tempers and dispositions of men. A revolution yet more universal we have in prospect; and certain prophecies seem to justify this grand and pleasing expectation. We are permitted to look forward to a glorious period, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea: when the Son shall have the heathen for his inheritance; when converts shall
fly

fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows; when the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of Christianity, and all Israel shall be saved. SERM.
XIX.

We are permitted to look forward to a period when the Jews shall be brought in, with the fulness of the Gentiles: when the veil shall be taken off the heart of the prejudiced Israelites, and when the worship of the true God shall be established among the idolatrous nations of the earth.

By what extraordinary dispensations of providence the dispersed Israelites and idolatrous strangers are to be gathered within the confines of Christ's church, it may not become us to conjecture. But under the administration of a God infinitely wise, powerful, and gracious, we doubt not but it will be finally effected. A new world, in which dwelleth righteousness, presents itself to our view; in the future spread and

F f f 2 triumph

SERM.
XIX.

triumph of the gospel. Then in a sense peculiar to that glorious period, "every plant which our heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

Those nations which are now overspread with darkness, will then be visited with a divine light. They will be turned from dumb idols and vanities, to serve the living and true God. They will know this God, and Jesus Christ his Son, whom to know is life eternal. Instead of a superstitious and idolatrous worship, there will be the worship of the Father in spirit and in truth. Under the pure and peaceful administration of the gospel, at some future glorious period, the nations of the world reconciled to God, may be reconciled to each other. Wars may cease from among men, universal order and harmony may be restored, and the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.

Blessed

Blessed world indeed! when pride and envy, ambition and sensuality shall retire in disgrace, and when every unbecoming and injurious interest shall be sacrificed at the shrine of Christian meekness and charity.

SERM.
XIX.

That will be a glorious period indeed, when the religion of the gospel, in its purity and power, shall become the religion of the whole earth. When its professors shall adorn it by an unadulterated faith, and by a blameless, exemplary, and virtuous life. When they shall live and love as brethren; as members of the same body, as children of the same family, and as heirs, through grace, of the same incorruptible and heavenly inheritance.

But while we are looking forward to a more glorious triumph of the gospel, in its moral and sanctifying power, let us remember, that a great duty is incumbent upon us, according to our different

SERM.
XIX.

ferent abilities and opportunities, in furthering so great and glorious a cause. This work is to be gradually effected, and Christians in all ages are to exert themselves as the humble instruments of the Almighty in its final accomplishment.

More particularly, it is our duty, after an humble and diligent examination, to abide by what we apprehend to be the truths of Christ's religion, as opposed to every innovation and corruption. Never let us by our language or example, give any countenance to errors or superstitions, however acceptable to the multitude. Since these are the plants which our heavenly Father has not planted, and which it is the grand design of the gospel entirely to eradicate. And finally, let us zealously adopt every measure for the propagation of the truth, which is countenanced by reason and scripture, and
which

which is sanctified by the virtues of our
holy religion.

SERM.
XIX.

Let us, in a spirit of meekness, endeavour to convince gainfayers, and ever cultivate due respect and charity for all those who, having been upright and diligent in their inquiries after truth, may nevertheless entertain a difference of opinion, in respect to certain doctrines of religion.

The moral and sanctifying power of the gospel must, with all true conscientious Christians, be the grand essential object, in which all their pious wishes and endeavours mutually terminate. "In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them and mercy, and upon the Israel of God."

SERMON

SERMON XX.

THE APPROVED MINISTER.

Preached at GLOUCESTER *August 28, 1783,*

AT THE

ORDINATION

OF THE

Rev. Mr. TREMLETT, GLOUCESTER,

— Mr. HUGHES, TEWKSBURY,

— Mr. KINGS, FAIRFORD.

My Rev. Brethren,

SERM.
XX.

NOTHING but your own very particular and earnest request, in connection with certain peculiar circumstances, could possibly have prevailed upon me to address you on this interesting and solemn occasion.

To

To give advice has always been conceived of as a very hazardous and arduous undertaking. It is more especially so in the presence of those who, by reason of superior age, and larger experience, must be conceived of by the public, and are in reality, much better qualified for so important an office.

SERM.
XX.

But having been prevailed upon to promise, I shall now attempt, by divine assistance to fulfil the engagement, while with a spirit of meekness and fraternal affection, I propose to your more particular consideration, the advice of the apostle Paul to Timothy.

II. TIMOTHY ii. 15.

Study to shew thyself approved.

AN ambition to excel in any department of life, in which we are placed by the providence of God, is in itself, *praise worthy*, and productive of very

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SERM.
XX.


important and beneficial effects. Unless we are animated in some degree by this principle, we shall appear with little reputation or usefulness in the more common callings and professions of life; and unless we study to shew ourselves approved both in the sight of God and man, as the ministers of the religion of Jesus, we cannot expect to engage in the duties of our office, either with credit or comfort to ourselves, or much spiritual advantage to the church of Christ: A careless or indolent ministry is not only insipid in itself, but productive of very mischievous consequences in respect to the power and progress of religion. Such a ministry ought never to be countenanced; and those who take upon them the sacred office, ought seriously to remember, that it is their duty to shew themselves approved in the diligent and faithful discharge of it. And if this be our study, we shall not engage in the Christian ministry from unworthy motives, nor shall we
make

make it a mere secondary object ; our hearts will be engaged in our work, and we shall give ourselves wholly to it ; watching for souls as those that must give account ; feeding the church of God ; rightly dividing the word of life ; making full proof of our ministry. Study to shew yourselves approved :

SERM.

XX.

First, In the sight of God.

Secondly, In the presence of his professing church. And,

Thirdly, In your more general intercourse with the world.

I. In the sight of God. This I mention first, because of all others it is the most important. We are always encompassed with the divine presence ; his eye penetrates our hearts, and he is intimately acquainted with the most secret principles that operate there. This being the case, it should be our

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first

SERM.
XX.

first concern in the ministerial office to approve ourselves in the sight of God, both in respect to the *motives* that induce us to make choice of this office, and the *manner* in which we discharge the duties of it.

Our motives must be of such a kind as will bear the test of our own consciences, and even the scrutiny of the God of heaven.

We must not hastily, or thoughtlessly, rush upon this work, but engage in it deliberately, after mature and very serious consideration; the principles which actuate us, must be carefully examined, and seriously weighed in our own breasts.

Would we approve ourselves to God, we must not assume the sacred function from any mean or unworthy motives, such as the love of filthy lucre; an affectation of dignity, or an extravagant passion

tion for popular applause, but from a pious regard to the glory of God, the honour of his Son, and the salvation of precious and immortal souls. SERM.
XX.

Those who enter upon the ministerial office, under the influence of those principles, are the men whom God approves, and will graciously reward; and none but these are intitled to expect his blessing and acceptance in the great work. When men of this character present themselves before the Lord in the devotional offices of their sacred function; they have confidence towards God; they have a cheerful persuasion of his gracious presence, and divine approbation; and this persuasion enlivens them with joy, inspires them with satisfaction, and renders them superior to every discouragement which they meet with from the prejudices and passions of the world around them.

Those

SERM.
XX.

Those ministers of religion who are sincerely devoted to the service of God, and the honour of their Redeemer, act upon those principles of faith and piety, of purity and charity, which need neither disguise nor apology, and which will always endure the strictest scrutiny. It is their first concern to present themselves approved in the sight of God; they *study* to do this, and spare no pains in the important work of self-examination. The views with which they undertake the office, and the motives by which they are actuated in the discharge of it; these, and these alone, decipher their character in the eye of that God, who seeth not as man seeth, and to whom they must finally give account.

Would we approve ourselves in his sight as to the manner in which we perform the duties of our office; we must be *diligent* and *faithful*. The work of the Lord must not be done negligently; it is so honourable in itself,
and

and of such vast consequence to the best interests of others, that it calls for the most strenuous exertion of our powers, and must be made the object of our unremitting care and attention. He whose eye is constantly upon us, expects this at our hands—who cannot look for his approbation, while we stand all the day *idle*, or when we pay only a luke-warm attention to the duties of our function.

SERM.
XX.

He also expects that we be found *faithful*; that we sincerely aim at his glory in the promotion of truth, piety, and virtue in the world; that we act upon principle in our public ministrations, holding back nothing that may be profitable; that we seriously exhort, that we faithfully admonish, that we tenderly administer encouragement and consolation, giving to each his portion in due season.

Among men it is required, that a steward be found faithful; and the obligation

SERM.
XX.

ligation to fidelity increases in proportion to the importance of the trust deposited with him.

You, my brethren, in a subordinate sense, may justly be conceived of as stewards of the household of God. With you, in your public character as ministers of the Christian religion, are lodged the oracles of God. These you will explain with uncorrupt integrity, not as those who adulterate the word, but as of sincerity, in the sight of God, so will ye speak in the name of Christ. To your more immediate care and oversight are committed the administration of religious ordinances, and the spiritual interests of the professing church. For its prosperity you will fervently pray, and diligently labour, faithfully exerting your several abilities for the advancement of the kingdom of our Saviour in the world. As the ministers of the religion of Christ, would we be approved in the sight of God, we must be

be faithful to the dictates of our own consciences ; jealous of the credit and glory of the gospel, and most affectionately attentive to the best interests of those, who are immediately the subjects of our spiritual charge.

SERM.
XX.

II. We must study to shew ourselves approved, not only in the sight of God, but also in the presence of his professing church. That particular part of the church of which we have the oversight, will demand our first and chief attention. To this we stand in a peculiar relation, and here we are to be ambitious to shew ourselves approved. I do not say that we are to approve ourselves to any pernicious errors or prejudices which prevail in the church, only that we are to give no unnecessary offence, that our ministry be not blamed. Would we approve ourselves to those particular churches over which we are called to preside, " we must be very attentive to our private studies," " serious and

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earnest

SERM.
XX.

earnest in our public devotions," "and prudent and affectionate in the whole of our deportment."

1. We must be very attentive to our private studies. Without this the character of a minister will become trifling and insignificant, and his public services insipid, if not contemptible. A Christian of good natural sense, who stately attends the worship of his God, will easily discover, whether we be labourers in the vineyard of our Master, or whether we be mere men of leisure and dissipation. Serious, sensible, judicious Christians will be greatly disappointed, if we have neglected a suitable previous preparation for the public services of the sanctuary. I may add, they will not only be disappointed, but also greatly offended.

The applauses of some may be easily secured, without much labour or study, provided the minister of religion can accommodate

accommodate himself to their peculiar taste and notions. But you, my brethren, cannot in conscience be satisfied with this. While you speak with a plainness that the most illiterate may understand, you wish to approve yourselves to Christians of mature and solid judgment in connection with serious piety.

SERM.
XX.

To be qualified for this we must spend some considerable portion of our time in a retirement from the world; we must dig for knowledge as for hid treasures. We must endeavour to furnish our minds with a variety of moral and divine sentiments, and hold frequent converse with the sacred discoveries of divine revelation, and the exalted prospects opened upon us in the gospel. In a word, "we must give ourselves to reading, meditation, and prayer."

In the diligent use of these means, we may hope for the divine blessing and
H h h 2 assistance.

SERM.

XX.

assistance ; while those who neglect them, generally expose the gospel ministry and their own characters to derision and contempt.

2. Would we approve ourselves to those particular churches over which we are called to preside—We must be very serious and earnest in our public devotions.

These exercises must not be performed with a philosophic calmness, but with Christian fervour ; they must not be viewed as trials of skill, or as fair opportunities, merely to display the powers of genius—but as *means* ordained of God for the spiritual edification of his professing church. Viewing them in this light, the temper with which we should engage in them is exceedingly obvious. We are to conduct these devotions with a spirit of unaffected gravity and seriousness. The air of our address should be interesting ; such as
may

may fix the attention of our hearers, and manifest a sense of God and religion upon our own hearts. An unfeeling indifference in the discharge of the public duties of our office, will render our work very burdensome to ourselves, and will be accompanied with a very pernicious influence both on the minds and morals of others. If we appear uninterested in the truths which we deliver, let them be ever so important in themselves, they will never reach the hearts of our hearers. And if they remain unaffected, are not the grand ends of our ministry defeated? How are sinners to be converted from the error of their ways? How are the saints to be edified and comforted? Not by an indolent negligent ministry, but by one that is accompanied with light and power, which does not merely amuse and entertain, but which comes home to the cases and consciences of our hearers. Both our prayers and our sermons, ought, as much as possible, to be accommodated

SERM.
XX.

SERM.
XX.

modated to these, and in proportion as this is the case, our work will be pleasing and comfortable to ourselves, and we may hope, with the divine blessing, very useful to others.

It is melancholy that any who are invested with the Christian ministry, should deem it sufficient, merely to engage in the work officially. If so much time be but spent in the public offices of devotion, and so many ceremonies be but observed with exactness, then the *duty* is said to be performed. But how performed, if the heart of the minister be not in his work? hastily and carelessly. The work of the Lord in this case is performed with negligence. In this I mean not to reflect on any particular description of ministers; since such, it is feared, may be found in very different communions. But under whatever form, or in whatever church, we cannot conceive of them as public blessings, or as the pastors after God's own heart,

heart. Let it be our ambition to ap-
prove ourselves in the presence of his
professing church, by a grave, serious,
and affectionate discharge of the several
duties of public devotion. Let us be-
ware of an air of affected solemnity on
the one hand, and an air of negligence
and cold indifference on the other.
Let us speak as the oracles of God; and
let us pray as those, who are animated
by a spirit of grace and supplication.
Thus will our office be magnified; our
own hearts improved and sanctified;
and, with the blessing of Almighty God,
his church greatly edified and multi-
plied.

SERM.
XX.

3. Would we approve ourselves to
these particular churches, of which we
have the oversight, we must be prudent
and attentive in the whole of our de-
portment. This will be absolutely ne-
cessary, if we would maintain a cha-
racter consistent and respectable. An
imprudent minister does a great injury
to

SERM.
XX.

to himself, and the sacred cause in which he is publicly engaged. The conduct of such a one will give great offence; and his ministrations, though accompanied with considerable abilities, will lose their energy on the hearts of others, and become quite ineffectual to their reformation and improvement. A prudent conduct on our part will be doubly necessary, whether we regard our own character, or the honour of that religion of which we are ministers. It is expedient more especially from us, that we order our affairs with discretion; and that we behave ourselves wisely in a perfect way; that we engage in amusements with an exemplary moderation, and never suffer visits of mere civility and politeness, to interfere with those which may be properly termed pastoral, and which may be reasonably expected from us, if we have the interest of religion truly at heart. These latter are of the first importance, and therefore demand our first attention.

You

You doubtless will rejoice in every opportunity, which a gay and dissipated age may afford you, of religious conversation, with the different families of your respective charges. The rich and the poor may thus be very materially benefited by so pleasing and rational an intercourse; and the rising generation, *the hope of futurity*, will, I am persuaded, have an interest in your very affectionate regards. With what a sacred pleasure will you instruct, and encourage them, while you attempt to direct their feet into the paths of wisdom, peace and happiness!

SERM.
XX.

You, my brethren, will be especially careful, diligently to improve those seasons of affliction with which your different connections *are*, or *may* be conversant. Your friends, and the families of your friends, will then naturally look up to you with confidence and affection. You will acquit yourselves at such trying periods, in a manner becoming your

SERM.
XX.

sacred profession, bearing their burdens in the exercise of the tenderest sympathy; and suggesting those consolations of which they are permitted to avail themselves, as the disciples of Jesus, and firm believers in his religion. With a melancholy satisfaction you will take your seat with them in the house of mourning; and as the ministers of a religion full of comfort to such. You, under God, will become the benevolent and honoured instruments of pouring the balm of divine consolation into their wounded spirits. Such visits as these, conducted with prudence and affection, will inspire your own hearts with a sensible satisfaction, and cannot fail to make a very lasting and favourable impression on the minds of the people of your charge. When they are thus convinced, that you are tenderly interested in every thing which respects their welfare and happiness, they will attend with increasing pleasure and benefit on
your

your more public labours in the church of Christ.

SERM.

XX.

Thus prudent in your deportment, thus friendly and affectionate in your attentions, your character must stand high in the esteem of all, except those who are too careless to *notice*, or too insensible to *feel*, the endearing excellencies of real worth and goodness.

III. In the third and last place. As ministers of religion, who are concerned both for its honour and progress, we must study to shew ourselves approved in our more general intercourse with the world. Some intercourse we must have with it, unless we are so unsocial in our dispositions, as to prefer the retirement of a monastic life; and some intercourse we ought to have with it, if we would recommend the profession and practice of religion to mankind in general. We do not live in those dark ages, in which it was con-

SERM.
XX

ceived good policy for the clerical order to excite a reverence for their characters, by an affectation of holy reserve and mortification. The ministers of religion in the present age, must converse with men of very different principles and characters, and in their intercourse with such, it is also expected, that they shew themselves approved, as men of education, as persons of intelligence, and as not totally unacquainted with the common and decent civilities of life. It is an error to suppose, that our profession obliges us to such a retirement from the world, that whenever we step into it, we must be awkward and affected.

This indeed has too often been the case; but unless in the estimation of a vulgar and ignorant superstition, the character of a minister cannot be conceived of as on this account the more respectable. Such a one is not more exact in his morals, nor more heavenly
in

in his temper, because he is rude, clownish, or whimsical,

SERM.
XX.

We are not to conform ourselves to the world in any of its licentious levities and gaieties. But there can be *no harm*, nay in many situations it is highly expedient, that ministers who sustain a public character, should be men of easy address, and free conversation. Our office is devotional, but by no means obliges us either to be melancholy or morose. The duties in which we stately engage, do not partake of the gloom of superstition, nor any way disqualify us for a free and cheerful intercourse with society. To suppose it, would be a great reflection upon Christianity, and at the same time must make a very unfavourable impression upon the minds of those, whom we could wish to esteem and embrace it, and whom it is our duty to win over to the truth of a conversation amiable and inviting.

SERM.
XX.

I have only to add on this part of the subject, that I do not plead for such an intercourse with the world as might be in the least injurious either to our character or usefulness; and if our conversation in the world be honourable, and such as becomes the gospel, then those professors of religion must be uncharitable indeed, who are inclined either to suspect or censure it. You would not give just cause of offence by an improper use of that liberty, which is equally the right of ministers with others. You are very sensible that some things may be lawful, which in certain situations are by no means expedient. In such situations, you will follow the things which make for peace, and which tend most effectually to the edifying of the church of Christ. You wish to shew yourselves approved as the ministers of Jesus, and as the avowed advocates of a pure and undefiled religion.

As

As such, may the blessing of the Al- SERM.
mighty rest upon you; may the angel XX.
of his gracious presence constantly attend you, in your going out and coming in, in your private studies, and public devotions; and when Christ, the chief shepherd, shall appear, may you appear with him in glory, and have many that shall be your crown of rejoicing, in the day of the Lord Jesus.

SERMON

SERMON XXI.

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.*

LUKE XVI. 24.

I am tormented in this flame.

SERM.
XXI.

WHAT, my brethren, are the dreadful crimes which have plunged this unhappy man into such an abyfs of misery? Is he a profane sensualist of his own body? Has he drenched his hands in innocent blood? Has he made the widow and orphan the prey of his injustice? Is he a man without principle, without morals, without character?—You who conceive of a life in

* The sentiments and language of this discourse are principally taken from the celebrated MASSILLON.

in which no passion is indulged to excess, as truly Christian, and that not to do evil, is all that is required by the religion of the gospel—Hear his history.

SERM.
XXI.

The condemned man, who this day instructs you from the bottomless pit, is thus described by our Saviour: He was rich, he was cloathed with purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day; he was less attentive than he ought to have been to the necessities of Lazarus, who languished at his gate. These are all his faults, and in vain do we search for others in the licentiousness of his manners; for they are not laid to his charge. It would be rashness in us to impute to him irregularities, which his history does not record, and of which he is acquitted, by the silence of Jesus Christ. By perverting the sense and spirit of this history, we contradict the very design of our Saviour, and deprive ourselves of all

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SERM. that advantage which he intended we
XXI. should derive from it.

Where had been the necessity, my brethren, for Jesus Christ to open to our view this abyss of misery, to shew us there—a dissolute man, a notorious sinner. We well know that fornicators, profane persons, and extortioners, shall not inherit his kingdom: the whole scripture is a continual prediction of the misery prepared for them. Does he this day uncover the bottomless pit? It is to shew us a man under sentence of condemnation, whom we did not expect to find there; whose greatest crime was this—“that he had not been virtuous.” It is to teach us, that a life altogether worldly, even when free from any excess, is, in the eyes of our Saviour, a criminal life, and deserving of punishment beyond the grave. This is the grand design and spirit of the history here related by our Saviour. In the portrait of the rich man,

man, you have the picture of a life of ease and self-indulgence, accompanied with neither vice nor virtue. In the recital of his punishment, you see its condemnation, and deplorable destiny. In other words—"The innocence of the world exposed and condemned," is the subject of this discourse.

SERM.
XXI.

It is of little importance to our edification absolutely to determine, whether Jesus Christ, in this chapter, relates a matter of fact which happened at Jerusalem, or only veiled the moral of his instructions, as was frequently his custom, under the similitude of a parable. Whether he represents himself as a shepherd, exploring the mountains after a lost sheep, and filled with joy when he has found it, or whether he really goes even to Samaria in search of a sinful woman, to call her back from her wanderings; the parable is not less affecting to the conscience of the sinner, than the real history. Whether

SERM.
XXI.

the condemnation of this unhappy rich man be matter of fact, or only figurative, the truth we mean to establish upon it is not less real, nor are the motives of terror less reasonable.

1. There was in Jerusalem, says Jesus Christ, " a certain rich man : " he adds nothing to this circumstance, which is degrading. He does not tell us, that having been born in meanness, he came at first to Jerusalem poor and destitute, and advanced himself there by the vilest traffic, by ways unknown, and therefore always suspicious ; or, that he insolently rejoiced in a fortune which he had meanly acquired. He was not another *Zaccheus*, who had accumulated an immense fortune by public oppression ; who had exacted for himself Cæsar's tributes, who afterwards purchased a name with the price of silver, and perfected his baseness by the pomp of dignities, and the distinction of titles. We are not permitted to surmise,

mise, that the rich man in the parable descended ~~from~~ a father covetous and rapacious, or that he inherited an estate which was the wages of iniquity. The silence of Jesus Christ fully vindicates him from all these reproaches. He was rich, he peaceably enjoyed the patrimony of his fathers, free from ambition, void of care, and only enjoying those delicacies which his fortune procured him. Is there any one among us, my brethren, who possesses his wealth in circumstances more innocent?

SERM.
XXI.

2. In the second place: "He was cloathed with purple and fine linen." The purple indeed was a species of cloathing of very great value; but we are not told that it exceeded the bounds which custom had prescribed to his birth and rank; nor are we told, that the labourer or tradesman ever suffered by his grandeur or vanity. It is not laid to the charge of this unhappy rich man, that with his attention to dress,
he

SERM.
XXI.

he indulged a criminal passion. He was cloathed superbly, he took delight in splendor and magnificence; and in the synagogue, where the worship was adapted to the senses, rather than spiritual; where they thought, that merely the magnificence of the temple, and the retinue of sacrifices honoured the Lord; where God himself was never revealed, but under symbols of external glory; this excess was more excusable, than under the gospel, where Jesus Christ, poor and abased, enjoins upon his followers, modesty and simplicity.

3. In the third place: "He fared sumptuously every day." Nor is this prohibited by the law of Moses. The milk and honey were included in the promises to Abraham's children, and it was permitted them to enjoy that abundance, which had been proposed as the recompence of their fidelity. Moreover when the rich man is charged with living sumptuously, he is not reproached

ed for having used the meats prohibited by the law, or for neglecting the observance of those various fasts which it prescribed; nor did he avail himself of his birth, fortune, or delicacy, as a pretext for being excused those rigorous rites.

SERM.
XXI.

We acknowledge that he fared sumptuously every day; but his revenue was equal to the expence: He lived in splendor and magnificence; but it is not added, that he was guilty of debauchery and excess; that libertines or atheists were his guests; or that licentious discourse was the seasoning of his repast. He is not described as going from his table in search of some profane amusements, to occupy his leisure, and to relieve the satiety caused by intemperance; or as being seized with a rage for gaming, or hazarding at one cast of the die, the fortune of his children, and the heritage of his ancestors. Finally, it is not said, that dangerous connections,

SERM. connections, and the intrigues of pas-
XXI. sion, filled up the remainder of his daily
engagements.

In respect to the religion and faith of his fathers, we find nothing to object concerning him. He was no unbeliever, nor did he think of rendering himself famous, by obtruding doubts concerning the miracles which God had wrought, or the revelations which he had made of himself to the patriarchs. He did not regard the common faith as a vulgar prejudice. The superstitions of the Pharisees, the errors of the Sadducees, the disputes and animosities of these two sects which divided the synagogues, did not make him conclude, that the synagogue itself had nothing certain in its laws and worship, or that religion was an human device. He offered the sacrifices that were instituted, and the oblations that were prescribed. In a word, he is not called a cruel master, a false friend, or an implacable enemy.

religion. He did not avail himself of his fortune to corrupt innocence; he never violated the bed of his neighbour, and the reputation and prosperity of another had never inspired him either with envy or melancholy. To speak after our manner, he was a man that lived magnificently in Jerusalem, of regular manners, and irreproachable character, hospitable both to citizens and strangers; one of those men whom the age applauds, whom the voice of the public extols, and whom piety itself oft-times ventures not to condemn.

Does this man then, my brethren, appear to you very culpable? Had any one, prior to Jesus Christ, publicly declared, that such a one should be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, would you not have vehemently exclaimed against the indiscretion and harshness of his zeal; would you not have exclaimed with indignation, like Israel of old, when Saul condemned his

SERM.
XXI.

son Jonathan—What has he done, and must he die, because he has tasted a little honey? The prejudices of infancy have impressed you with a terrible idea of this rich man; but whence does it proceed? Let us examine the subject, and make no addition to the narrative of the evangelist. He was rich, he was cloathed superbly, and lived sumptuously; and do you perceive in this any thing so heinous or dreadful? If I judged of him by your maxims and manners, he not only appears less culpable, but I discover him to be virtuous; and in the depravity of our day, if I now were to speak as a man of the world, I would hold him up as a model for your imitation. Is not the daily language respecting those that resemble him—Such a one lives nobly; he disposes of his fortune very honourably; his table is served with taste and magnificence; moreover he is a steady friend, and full of that probity, which constitutes true religion and solid virtue. Your thus extolling

tolling him is of little consequence—but, SERM.
XXI.
O my God! they form comparisons which reflect on the piety of thy servants; this, say they, is a model for imitation; how unlike those, who disgrace true piety, by harsh manners, and indiscreet singularities. This is the language of the world, my brethren. How I tremble to reflect, that this reprobate, whom Jesus Christ exhibits to view in the gospel, will be found at this day almost the first character among us!

But, perhaps, you will object his cruelty to Lazarus, and pretend, that in this particular at least, your character is superior to his. To this plea of false confidence, I would reply with St. Paul, that in vain you “give all your goods to feed the poor,” if you have not that charity, which believeth all things, which endureth all things; which is neither ostentatious nor envious, selfish nor voluptuous. If the sanctity of your manners do not harmonize with your

SERM.
XXI.

liberal donations, you do nothing, and are yourselves nothing in the sight of God. Alms-giving is a duty, but not the only one; and although to neglect it is to be culpable in respect to all the rest; nevertheless the observance of it is not the whole law. Let us then carefully and impartially examine the crime of this rich man, and perhaps you may find yourselves more culpable than he was.

“ There was a certain beggar named
“ *Lazarus*, which was laid at his gate full
“ of sores, desiring to be fed with the
“ crumbs which fell from the rich man’s
“ table, but no one gave unto him.”

There was, I confess, in this conduct, I know not what, which shocks all the sentiments even of common humanity. A voluptuary seated at a table loaded with delicacies, and insensible to the sufferings of an unhappy man before his eyes, so reduced as earnestly to wish for crumbs

crumbs to satisfy the hunger that devours him. There is something in this spectacle which forms a shocking contrast, and the mere virtue of the world is filled with indignation at such barbarity. But let us attend to all the circumstances in this parable, as delivered by our Saviour, and you will find that it was not so much the intention of our Lord to point out the rich man as a monster of inhumanity, as an indolent man, too much engrossed by his pleasures, and only deficient in his attention to the miseries of Lazarus. You will perceive, that the circumstance which respects this poor man is, if I may so speak, but an incident in the history, and that the delicate, voluptuous life of the rich man, forms its principal subject and design.

SERM.
XXI.

1. In the first place : Lazarus was a public beggar. Now is any thing more common than to pay but little attention to persons of this description, who
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SERM.
XXI.

have recourse to every town, both to witness and relieve their indigence : We can always persuade ourselves that their continual importunities are mere pretences, and that idleness, rather than necessity, is the real cause of their grievous complaints, and extreme poverty. In a word, the excuses which you every day make for refusing to relieve poor vagrants, the rich man might avail himself of in respect to Lazarus. It may be, that instances of retired poverty were treated by him with more attention and tenderness.

2. *Secondly.* We acknowledge that Lazarus, full of sores, lay at the rich man's gate. An object so deserving of pity, doubtless ought to have moved his compassion. Nevertheless it is worthy of remark, that a spectacle so offensive as Lazarus must have been, was not thrust from the gate, and that nothing churlish or severe ever escaped from the mouth of the rich man, who must have

have been disgusted with having continually the same object before his eyes. SERM.
XXI.

We may also observe, that he permitted this unfortunate man to make the entrance to his mansion his ordinary place of resort. You would, it may be, have quickly relieved him; but the desire of removing from your sight an object so offensive, might have been the principal motive of your charity, to one of the poor members of Christ. It may be left your delicacy should suffer in a single instance, you would have deemed your afflicted brother unworthy of relief immediately from yourself, and a domestic would have been commissioned as your almoner to Lazarus.

Finally. He did not give him the crumbs that fell from the table. But it is not said that Lazarus had asked for them; only, that he desired them. The rich man is not accused of refusing him the crumbs; but only that no one "gave him them." It is not said that
Lazarus

SERM.
XXI.

Lazarus supplicates his charity, or tells him the melancholy tale of his distresses. Lazarus is silent, and permits his wounds to speak on his behalf, thus modestly importuning in the most affecting form, the compassionate notice of the rich man : but his rank, his dissipation, his pleasures, do not permit him to descend to these attentions. It may be, he negligently gave orders to one of his faithless domestics to relieve this poor man, for in this manner the liberality of persons of his rank every day expresses itself. In one word, the crime described in this parable, is not so much inhumanity or cruelty, as indolence, and want of attention. When Abraham, from heaven, apprizes the rich man of the cause of his condemnation, he does not make use of that language, which Christ will address to the wicked, at the great day—Lazarus was naked, and you did not clothe him ; he was hungry, and you did not feed him ; he was sick, and you did not comfort him.

him: He only says,—“ My son, remember that thou in thy life time, receivedst thy good things.” Remember that you have lived at your ease upon the earth; and you are excluded from the rest promised to my posterity. Your fathers were pilgrims and strangers in the world, in which they had no possessions, but now they enjoy the promised inheritance, after which they so ardently aspired. You have sought your consolation upon the earth; henceforth you are no longer a child of the promise; you have not been blessed in me, and your portion is with unbelievers; you have made the place of your pilgrimage the seat of your delight; this unjustifiable felicity could not last for ever; every thing is now reversed, the tears of Lazarus are wiped away, and his afflictions are comforted; but your laughter and joy are changed for weeping and gnashing of teeth. Remember, my son, because thou in thy life time receivedst thy good things, and

SERM.
XXI.

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SERM.
XXI.

likewise Lazarus evil things; now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. This was the crime—a life spent in the pleasures of abundance—this was the reason of his condemnation, and we should be rash in seeking any other which the spirit of God has not pointed out in the gospel.

Are you surprised at this, my brethren? Are you then ignorant that it is a crime for Christians to be destitute of active virtue? Do you then believe, that adulterers, fornicators, and unjust persons are alone excluded from the kingdom of heaven? Ah! if a disciple of Moses, living under a law which required less sublimity of virtue, is condemned for having lived in ease and luxury, although free from gross excesses, do you think a child of the new law, a disciple of the gospel will be treated more favourably, while he lives to himself, and only abstains, like this rich man, from certain scandalous vices?

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It is an essential truth, my brethren, that a Christian cannot be predestinated, but in conformity while on earth, to the image of Jesus Christ. If your manners are not an imitation of his, if the Father does not find in you a resemblance of his Son, you will be rejected as a rough stone, which has not been polished by the hand of the builder, or as a deformed member, which is not in agreement with the rest of the body.

SERM.
XXI.

Now I ask you, my brethren,—To resemble Jesus Christ, is it sufficient to be neither a fornicator, nor profane person, nor unjust? Did he content himself with doing no one any injury, with rendering to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, with not being a wine-bibber or gluttonous? In a word with not being liable to be convicted, even by his enemies, of any gross sin? Was this the whole extent of our Saviour's virtue? Was he not also meek

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SERM.
XXI.

and lowly in heart? Did he not pray for his enemies? Was he conformed to the world? Was he ambitious of its honorary distinctions? He, who never fought his own glory, but the glory of his Father, and who hid himself when the people would have made him a king? Did he lead a life easy and agreeable, who bore his cross from the first moment of his mortal existence, whose course was finished, and whose character was perfected through sufferings? This is your model, Christians. Are you in the world, or retired from it, at court or in the cloister? If you bear not the image of Jesus Christ, you are for ever undone.

Nevertheless, you have no apprehensions in respect to your future safety, provided you live in a regularity which the world approves, and in which conscience accuses you of no gross crime. St. Augustin formerly complained, that certain heathens of his day, refused to be

be converted to the faith, because they led a life that was regular in the estimation of the world. When we exhort them, says he, to become Christians, they reply—"The grand concern is to live well. What will Jesus Christ enjoin, whom you preach? That I lead a blameless life. I already do this, I am no adulterer, I am no extortioner. What need then to change, and to embrace a new religion? If my life was criminal, you would then have reason to propose to me a law that regulates the manners, and prohibits excess; but if without the law of Jesus Christ I avoid these excesses, what need have I of his religion?" This, my brethren, is precisely the situation of certain professors of our day; the virtuous of the age, the persons of irreproachable character in the estimation of the world of whom I now speak. When we exhort them to a more Christian life, a life more agreeable to the maxims of the gospel, the examples of the saints, and of Jesus Christ,

SERM.
XXI.

SERM.
XXI.

Christ, they reply, that to live well is the great thing; to be a good citizen, a generous master, honest and disinterested—these are the essentials; with these virtues they are perfectly safe, and every thing else, which devotion enjoins, is altogether unnecessary.

But hear what the Father quoted above, observes on this subject in another place. “ Their conduct is irreproachable in the eye of the world; they are men of probity; they are faithful to their promises; they do no injustice, but they are not Christians—Why? The reason is this—Christians have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts; but you cherish and fathom these domestic enemies. Christians are not of this world, but you are its slaves, partisans and apologists. Christians are spiritual, but you are altogether earthly. Ah! if mere abstinence from excess were alone sufficient to constitute a Christian, has not Paganism

ism furnished us with wise men, regular and temperate, with illustrious women of austere virtue, and heroic manners, who were only influenced by the motives of honour and applause? And does the greatest virtue of our day come up to the strictness of these ancient models? It is not a freedom from gross irregularities that constitutes us Christians, but the practice of the virtues of the gospel. It is not manners irreproachable in the eyes of men, but the spirit of Christ crucified. It is not qualities which the world admires, but a lively faith, a pure conscience, and charity unfeigned. A tree which bears no fruit is accursed, as a tree dead and plucked up by the roots; and the gospel condemns to the same punishment, the unfaithful and the unprofitable servant."

Having shewn you, in the manners of the condemned rich man, the image of a mere worldly life, free from any gross crime,

SERM.
XXI.

crime, it is necessary that you be apprized by his punishment, of its final issue. “And it came to pass, that the “beggar died, and was carried by the “angels into Abraham’s bosom; the rich “man also died, and was buried.” What a new order of events, my brethren, here presents itself to our view! Lazarus dies first; for the Lord hastens to visit his elect, and to cut short their days with their sufferings; the rich man survives him: the Lord, on the other hand, in respect to sinners, delays to open the gates of death, that he may wait for their penitence even to the utmost. But at last the rich man dies; for though a great abundance may strongly attach us to life, it does not render us immortal. He is buried, a circumstance which is not noticed in connection with the death of Lazarus; funeral honours are paid to his memory; pomp and vanity display their banners even at his tomb; superb monuments publicly declare, that his body
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is mouldering in the dust, but his soul SERM.
XXI.
is plunged into an abyfs of misery. Lazarus dies, and it is with great difficulty that his deserted body finds a little earth for its burial; his end is without honour in the estimation of men, but his illustrious soul is carried in triumph into Abraham's bosom. The rich man dies; it is rumoured through the city; they praise his virtues; they extol his magnificence; his friends lament him, and his neighbours to console themselves under their loss, seek to immortalize his memory by titles and inscriptions. How fruitless their labour! even his name has not reached us; we only know him by his misery: he was rich, and he is reprobated: his birth, his tribe, his family, every thing of this kind is buried with him. Some there be "who have no memorial, who are
"perished as though they had never been,
"and are become as though they had never been born." Lazarus dies—it is not so much as known in Jerusalem that

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SERM.
XXI.

he ever lived, his death is as obscure as his life ; the world, which had not so much as known him, has not the trouble of forgetting him ; but his name is written in the book of life ; it is worthy of being recorded in the sacred scriptures, and preserved in the Christian church. “ For the bodies of the just are
“ buried in peace, and their name liveth
“ for ever.”

And now, my brethren, let us continue the history, and examine the circumstances of that punishment, which the rich man suffers in the place of torment. “ He lifts up his eyes, and sees
“ Abraham, and Lazarus in his bosom.” He lifts up his eyes for the first time. What surprise ! It intimates as much as if he had never once been apprized of the danger of his state through his whole life ; as if he had never once suspected, that the way in which he walked, so safe in appearance, and so approved by the world, could possibly lead him

him to perdition. Notorious finners are fully convinced, that their life is a life of reprobation, and are only quietted with the hope of one day reforming and living better; but those indolent effeminate souls, of whom I speak, who preserve themselves from scandalous excesses; these generally die without having known that they lived amiss.

SERM.
XXI.

The rich man condemned, sees Lazarus afar off, in the bosom of Abraham, invested with glory and immortality; that beggar, whom he had never vouchsafed to honour with one expression of regard, is in a state of peace and repose, while he feels himself devoured by everlasting burnings. What a contrast here! What an ardent desire does he feel to be as Lazarus! To what a secret rage is he conscious, because this is impossible. He sees at the same time the whole of that happiness which he has lost, and the irreparable evils which he has brought upon himself. He fixes

SERM.
XXI.

his eyes on the peace, serenity, and never-fading pleasure which Lazarus enjoys; and this one view becomes the source of all his miseries. He is made more wretched by the ever present image of the happiness which he has forfeited, than by the horrors of the punishment he suffers.

From such an abyss of misery, it may be, you who now hear me, will lift up your eyes, and behold in "Abraham's bosom," that wise and pious parent, whose faith and piety you deemed foolishness—the weakness of old age. You will then recollect the last instructions he addressed to you from the bed of death, the marks of tenderness he shewed you, and the dying requests he then made, in respect to the conduct of your life.

Yes, my brethren, from the midst of the flames, these children of wrath will see, in the bosom of Abraham, their brethren,

The Rich Man and Lazarus.

brethren, friends, and neighbours, re-
joicing in the glory of the saints; and
this spectacle alone will inspire them
with the most tormenting anguish.
They will say continually to them-
selves—See, this is the kingdom that was
prepared for us; this the portion which
awaited us; see the promises which
were made to us; we have renounced
them for a dream—for pleasures which
have endured only for a moment. Alas!
had we nothing to suffer in this abode
of horror, this loss alone—could it ever
be sufficiently lamented?

SERM.
XXI.

The condemned rich man is not only
made miserable by the ever present
image of that happiness which he has
lost; but also by the remembrance of
the good things which he had received
in his life. “My son, remember, that
“thou in thy life-time receivedst thy
“good things.” Now, what a number
of tormenting thoughts must have been
revived in his breast by this suggestion
of

SERM.
XXI.

of Abraham's. The advantages of a descent from a holy people, and a consecrated race, neglected and despised; the promises made to the posterity of Abraham, in respect to him, altogether useless; the temple, the altar, the sacrifices, the law, the instructions of the prophets, the examples of the just men of the synagogue, all ineffectual to his salvation. "Remember, thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." Recollect the days spent in luxury; that tribe of slaves, who were attentive even to prevent your wishes; those public honorary distinctions which were so acceptable and pleasing to you; those shining talents which attracted the esteem and admiration of the people. How tormenting to the soul, the comparison of its former with its present condition.

"Remember, thou in thy life-time
"receivedst thy good things." You
were a child of the saints, and born in
the

the midst of a faithful people ; you had all the advantages of a Christian education. I allotted you a soul well inclined, a heart defended by happy dispositions, almost every moment of your life was distinguished either by some secret suggestion, or public event which might remind you of your eternal salvation ; I appointed your birth in the midst of circumstances so favourable to piety ; I rendered the gratification of your irregular passions so extremely difficult ; I encompassed you with so many advantages on the side of virtue, that you have been at more pains to destroy yourself, than it would have cost you to secure your everlasting happiness. Recollect all that grace which you have so ungratefully abused, and with what ease you might have avoided that wretchedness into which you are now plunged. The second circumstance which has respect to the misery of this unhappy man, is the recollection of the past.

SERM.
XXI.

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SERM.
XXI.

3. He is also wretched, by reason of the sufferings which he endures—"I am tormented in this flame." A fiery thirst preys upon him; he asks a drop of water, not to extinguish, but to mitigate the ardour of its burning. Instead of the purple and fine linen with which he was formerly cloathed, he is now covered with a vestment of fire.

In a word, in proportion to his former pleasures, are his present torments. We know not, my brethren, what he suffers, and pretend not to explain it, lest we should enfeeble so terrible an image, by the language of an ordinary description. This we know, that almost two thousand years since, he cried out—"I am tormented in this flame."

St. Chrysostome, in one of his discourses, thus addressed himself to the court of Constantinople—"You are every day saying, my brethren, with an

an air of deplorable security, that you wish to see some one return from the other world, to tell you what passes there. Ah ! let this day satisfy your curiosity :—Hear this unhappy man whom Jesus Christ recalls from thence, and who gives you a dreadful detail of his condition there. This is a preacher with whom hell itself furnishes you. When we speak to you concerning the torments of the other life, we are obliged to soften our language for fear of offending your false delicacy. A truth which has terrified the Cæsars, converted tyrants, and changed the universe, is deemed, in our day, as only calculated to affect the minds of the illiterate and vulgar. These descriptions from us are heard with disdain, and referred to the multitude. But you ought to believe this unhappy man, who gives you a faithful narration of his own misery, and whose cries of despair address you more powerfully than the language he utters. With what attention

SERM.
XXI.

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SERM.
XXI.

do you listen to those persons who are returned from the most distant islands, while they give you an account of the manners and customs of countries which you will never visit? Why then do you not listen with a yet greater attention to this unhappy man, who comes to inform you of what passes in that place, from which he alone has returned, and which, perhaps, will be your eternal abode?

In the last place. The depraved manners of his brethren yet living, to whom the example of his voluptuous life, appearing to them as a model for their imitation, might prove the means of their final destruction, is another circumstance which constitutes the wretchedness of this unhappy man.—“ I pray thee, father Abraham, that thou wouldst send Lazarus to my father’s house, for I have five brethren, that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”

“ment.” He suffers by reason of the SERM.
sins of others, and the crimes of which XXI.
his brethren are guilty, increase the
anguish of his distress, because they are
the effect of his bad example ; he there-
fore intreats their conversion as a miti-
gation of his pains. Ah ! my brethren,
can you believe that there are persons
in the unseen world who are torment-
ed on account of those errors into which
you are daily falling ? It may be, that
that unhappy man who first corrupted
your innocence, with wild distraction
importunes his Judge, that he may be
permitted to come and shew you him-
self a spectacle of horror. It may be,
that that impious person who taught
you to question the faith of your fa-
thers, and who corrupted your heart
with the principles of irreligion and li-
centiousness, lifts up his voice in the
regions of despair, and prays that he
may come to undeceive you, and alle-
viate his misery by your conversion. It
may be, that that profane and aban-

SERM.
XXI.

done author, whose works, fatal to modesty, are daily making dangerous impressions upon your innocence, utters dreadful cries in the midst of the flames, and in vain sollicit, that some companion of his punishment, may come to inform you of his dreadful condition !

It may be, that the man who contrived those criminal exhibitions, to which you are running with such eagerness, feeling the rigour of his punishment increasing, in proportion as the dangerous effects of his art, convey new poison to your souls—It may be, that such a one causes his horrible cries to ascend even to Abraham's bosom, that he himself may appear on the theatre of his guilt, and that by the horror of so novel a spectacle, he may counteract the pernicious influence of those criminal entertainments, which owe their origin to him, and to which he is indebted for his remediless misery ! But what answer is made from the bosom
of

of Abraham to these reprobate souls? SERM.
XXI.
“ They have Moses and the prophets;”
“ if they hear not Moses and the pro-
“ phets, neither will they be persuaded
“ though one rose from the dead.” You
imagine that a miracle—that one raised
from the dead, or an angel immediately
commissioned from heaven to address
you—that so extraordinary a messenger
would instantly prevail upon you to re-
nounce the world, and to change your
life. You are saying this every day;
but you deceive yourselves, my bre-
thren; you would find new reasons
for scepticism, and your corrupted
hearts would ingeniously devise new
methods, by which to defend your-
selves against the evidence of truth.
The miracles of Jesus Christ did not
reform the hypocrisy of the Pharisees,
nor the infidelity of the Sadducees; by
reason of these they became more cri-
minal, but were not the more disposed
to credit his mission. The greatest
miracle of religion is the sublimity of
its

SERM.

XXI.

its doctrines, the purity of its morals, the grandeur and divinity of the scriptures; if you are not moved, convinced, and converted by these, every thing besides would be ineffectual. "They have Moses and the prophets; if they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." Read the scriptures, my brethren, thus begin, and conclude every day of your lives. It is the alone expedient which Jesus Christ here proposes to us, by which to escape the destiny of the condemned man in the gospel. Alas! if you meditate on these divine books, there will be no necessity for one coming to prove to you, that a worldly life, though free from scandalous excesses, is criminal, and deserving of punishment after death. We shall not be obliged to inform you, that the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence—that to seek consolation in the world, is to make an unlawful use of it—that to
live

live only to the body, is to destroy the
soul, and to be no disciple of Jesus
Christ. These are the most plain and
familiar truths of the gospel, and the
first principles of the doctrine of salva-
tion.

SERM.
XXI.

F I N I S.

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10 FEB 60

XXI

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